United Nations A/C.1/55/PV.1

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

First Committee
1st meeting
Tuesday, 5 September 2000, 4.25 p.m.
New York

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland, President of the General Assembly)

The meeting was called to order at 4.25 p.m.

Election of the Chairman of the First Committee

The Temporary Chairman: Rule 103 of the rules of procedure, as amended by Assembly resolution 52/163 of 15 December 1997, provides that each Main Committee shall elect a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence. The elections shall be held by secret ballot unless the Committee decides otherwise in an election where only one candidate is standing. The nomination of each candidate shall be limited to one speaker, after which the Committee shall immediately proceed to the election.

Furthermore, rule 110 of the rules of procedure provides that congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session — or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation — after all the officers of the Committee have been elected.

This meeting has been convened for the election of the Chairman of the First Committee. Are there any nominations?

Mr. González (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me, on behalf of the Chilean delegation, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

As Chairman of the First Committee, I have the honour to nominate the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations at Geneva, Ambassador U Mya Than, for the chairmanship of the fifty-fifth session of the First Committee. I would like to highlight Ambassador U Mya Than's career at the United Nations since 1984 and, in particular, his work in the field of international security and disarmament.

In that regard, Ambassador U Mya Than acted as the Deputy Representative of his country to the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva from 1985 to 1990 and from 1992 to 1996. Over the course of those years he acquired a mastery over disarmament and international security issues. In 1999, his Government appointed him its Permanent Representative to Geneva.

I also wish to underscore Ambassador U Mya Than's prominent role in introducing a multilateral dimension in the field of nuclear disarmament. In 1995, he introduced a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. As we all know, that resolution emphasizes the multilateral dimension of nuclear disarmament and calls for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament within the Conference on Disarmament. During the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1997

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00-63040 (E)

Ambassador U Mya Than proposed a draft protocol on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States.

Ambassador U Mya Than's professional career, which I have described briefly, both justify and substantiate his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I hope his nomination will be approved by consensus.

The Temporary Chairman: Mr. U Mya Than of Myanmar has been nominated by the representative of Chile. Since only one candidate has been nominated, I propose that under rule 103 the Committee decide not to hold a secret ballot.

It was so decided.

The Temporary Chairman: I therefore declare Mr. U Mya Than of Myanmar elected Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/55/PV.2

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

First Committee
2nd meeting
Thursday, 14 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: At the outset, I should like to extend a warm welcome to all delegations participating in the deliberations of the First Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to all Member States for the privilege and honour they have bestowed upon me and my country by electing me Chairman of this important body of the General Assembly. I am greatly honoured and deeply indebted to all members for the trust and confidence they have placed in me.

Moreover, I wish to express, on behalf of all members of the Committee, as well as on my own behalf, our deep appreciation to Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile for the skilful and effective manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the First Committee last year, at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

As I assume my duties as Chairman of this body, it is gratifying for me to know that I can count on the cooperation of all members of the Committee, as well as on the valuable experience and profound knowledge of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, Mr. Jin Yongjian; the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala; and the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Lin Kuo-chung, and his colleagues in the Secretariat. I am sure that the Committee will benefit from their experience. We look forward to their support in dealing with the many complex issues facing us.

At this organizational meeting, the Committee will proceed to the election of officers of the Committee — namely, the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur — as well as the adoption of the programme of work and timetable of the Committee for the current session. I should now like to take up the first item, namely, the election of the officers of the First Committee.

In that connection, I wish to inform the Committee that for the three posts of the vice-chairmanship, only two candidates have up to now been nominated, namely, Mr. Alberto Guani of Uruguay from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and Ms. Petra Schneebauer of Austria from the Group of Western European and other States. We still lack candidates for one post of Vice-Chairman from the Group of African States and for the post of Rapporteur from the Group of Eastern European States.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure and established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Alberto Guani of Uruguay and Ms. Petra Schneebauer of Austria Vice-Chairpersons of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

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00-64278 (E)

The Chairman: I should like to express my warm congratulations to Mr. Guani and Ms. Schneebauer on their election as Vice-Chairpersons of the First Committee. I am sure that with their rich experience in the field of disarmament, they will be able to make a valuable contribution to the work of the Committee.

I would like to draw the attention of the members of the First Committee to rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which specifically stipulates that congratulations to the officers of the Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session — or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation. Accordingly, I shall now call upon the representative of Chile, who will speak on behalf of Ambassador González, the Chairman of the First Committee during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Coutts (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Chile, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

At the same time, I wish to congratulate the Vice-Chairpersons, Ms. Schneebauer and Mr. Guani. We are all convinced that, with their experience at the United Nations in the field of disarmament and international security, among their other well-known skills, they will contribute importantly to the successful work of our Committee.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank yet again all delegations present here for their cooperation in advancing the work of the session that has just ended.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Uruguay, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee.

Mr. Guani (Uruguay), Vice-Chairperson of the Committee (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your important task at this session. We are convinced that you, with your vast experience and the many years you have devoted to the Organization, will demonstrate your fitness to guide our work in the manner we all hope for. We also wish to thank Ambassador González of Chile for his dedicated work at the last session. We assure you, Sir, that we are entirely at your disposal in undertaking the work with which you entrust us. You will have our full cooperation.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Ms. Schneebauer (Austria), Vice-Chairperson of the Committee: I, too, would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to thank your predecessor, Ambassador González of Chile, for the work he did last year.

Let me express my sincere gratitude for the First Committee's having proven its confidence in me by electing me as one of its Vice-Chairpersons. I feel very honoured and I hope that, with members' cooperation and support, I will be able to be a good servant to this Committee.

I am looking forward to working together with the Chairman, the other Vice-Chairperson, the Rapporteur, the very able staff of the Secretariat and especially with all the delegations.

The Chairman: The Committee has thus concluded its consideration of the election of its officers.

Organization of work

The Chairman: May I draw members' attention to document A/C.1/55/1, containing a letter dated 11 September 2000 from the President of the General Assembly, informing me that the General Assembly has decided to allocate agenda items 65 to 81 to the First Committee for its consideration.

Before proceeding to the proposed programme of work and timetable, as contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1, I wish to recall that, at the open-ended informal meeting of the First Committee held on 12 September 2000, the Committee tentatively agreed, albeit on an *ad referendum* basis, to its draft programme of work and timetable for this session. In this formal setting, allow me to make a few comments on this proposed document.

The programme of work and timetable which delegations have before them have been prepared taking into account a number of initiatives proposed over the past several years, including the Assembly's decision 52/416 B on the rationalization of the work of the Committee. According to these initiatives, as well

as established practice, the First Committee begins its substantive work immediately after the conclusion of the general debate in the plenary. For the current session, that should fall on 2 October as a result of my consultations among delegations during the past week. It appears that a majority of the delegations could agree on this date to begin the substantive work of the First Committee.

With regard to the closing date for the Committee's deliberations, it will be recalled that, under the same General Assembly decision, it was agreed that the First Committee would

> "make every effort to conduct and conclude its substantive work with the most efficient use of time in no less than thirty meetings and in a time-frame not exceeding five weeks". *(General Assembly decision 52/416 B, para. (a) (i))*

Moreover, the President of the General Assembly appealed to the Chairmen of the Main Committees to conclude the work of their Committees by mid-November in order to enable the plenary of the Assembly to consider the reports of the Main Committees during the latter part of that month.

Consequently, the First Committee will conclude its session on 3 November 2000, as set by the General Assembly. That allows us five weeks in which we will hold a total of 31 meetings. Let me express my belief that, with the cooperation and concerted efforts of the member States, the Committee will successfully and promptly accomplish its tasks within the number of meetings and the time-frame allocated to it.

Like last year, the First Committee will organize its work at this session in three phases, as reflected in the draft programme of work and timetable. The first stage will be devoted to the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items, namely, items 65 to 81, allocated to the First Committee. It will cover the period from 2 to 13 October, with a total of 11 meetings. In this regard, I should like to remind delegations that, as in previous years, statements should be limited, whenever possible, to 15 minutes in order to enable as many delegations as possible to participate in the general debate.

While I am on this subject, allow me to invite those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate kindly to inscribe their names on the list of speakers with the Secretariat. It should also be noted that the deadline for the closure of the list of speakers in the general debate on all items will be Monday, 2 October at 6 p.m.

The second stage will begin on 13 October and end on 23 October, with eight meetings set aside for thematic discussion on item subjects, as well as for the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 65 to 81. During this period, delegations may wish to introduce relevant draft resolutions and conduct consultations on those drafts.

Regarding the deadline for submission of draft resolutions, I should like to underline that, in order to facilitate the work of the Committee and give sufficient time to delegations for consultations, the Committee may wish to set Friday, 13 October, at 6 p.m., as the deadline, as agreed at the informal meeting on 12 September.

It is my intention to request the cooperation of delegations in adhering strictly to this deadline. I strongly encourage delegations to submit and introduce their draft resolutions as early as possible, especially traditional draft resolutions and those that will entail programme budget implications, in order to enable the Secretariat to prepare the necessary documents. This will also facilitate the work of the Committee in taking action on them and in meeting the mandatory deadline required for submission to the Fifth Committee.

Let me remind delegations that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee require time to review the programme budget implications of the draft resolutions before they can be acted upon by the Assembly.

The last stage of the Committee's work is action on all draft resolutions. As reflected in the programme of work, 11 meetings have been allocated for this purpose, from 25 October to 3 November, on which date the Committee will conclude its session.

With these brief remarks, I should like to propose to delegations the draft programme of work and timetable, as contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1. The draft programme of work and timetable, as delegations as aware, were considered and accepted by referendum at the informal meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday, 12 September. I hope that this draft programme of work and timetable, which were arrived

at after due consideration and following past precedent, meet with the Committee's approval.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the First Committee adopts the programme of work and timetable, as contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should now like to draw the attention of the Committee to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly affecting the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in decision 34/401.

In order to fully utilize the time and conference services available to the Committee, I should like, with the cooperation and support of delegations, to convene the meetings of the Committee promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., respectively. Permit me to emphasize the utmost importance of punctuality in ensuring an effective and orderly organization of our work and achieving economy for our Organization. Punctuality is a virtue, and I trust that all representatives in this Committee, being virtuous persons, will be strictly punctual.

One more request, which is becoming quite traditional these days. Delegations are kindly requested to switch off their cellular phones during the proceedings of the Committee. I hope that this, too, will meet with the Committee's understanding and full support.

May I draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that I have been informed by the Secretariat that the Fifth Committee is seeking the views of the members of the First Committee with regard to the proposed medium-term plan 2002-2005 on programme 2 concerning disarmament. The First Committee has been requested to convey the views of its members to the Fifth Committee not later than 25 October 2000, so that the Fifth Committee may begin its consideration of this question in time.

In this connection, I should like to request the members of the Committee to look into the subject matter, namely the proposed medium-term plan 2002-2005, as contained in document A/55/16, part I, corrigenda 1 and 2, and part II, and also in document A/55/6.

I am sure that delegations will be interested to know when the inter-sessional consultations on small arms will be conducted during this session of the First Committee. A number of delegations have asked about this. I have carried out consultations with Ambassador Carlos Dos Santos of Mozambique, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and arrangements are being made to organize consultations on small arms.

The first meeting of the inter-sessional consultations on small arms will be held on 6 October in this room, in the afternoon, following the meeting of the First Committee.

I give the floor to the Secretary of the First Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): With regard to our organization of work, I wish to draw the attention of members of the Committee to the following points. First, for the current session, the General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the General Committee, has decided to depart once again from the rule that one quarter of the members must be present before a meeting of the Main Committee may be declared open for debate. The General Assembly made this recommendation on the understanding that such a departure from the rule did not involve any permanent change in the relevant provision of rule 108 [67] of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, pertaining to the opening of a meeting whereby a majority of members must be present for any decision to be taken.

Secondly, as indicated in the programme of work and the timetable contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be closed on Monday, 2 October, at 6 p.m. A number of delegations have already indicated their intention to participate in the general debate. In order to enable the First Committee to fully utilize the time and the conference facilities available to it, all those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate are kindly requested to inscribe their names on the list of speakers, which is with the Secretariat, at their earliest convenience.

For the benefit of Conference Services, delegations are requested to provide a minimum of 30 copies of all prepared statements to the Conference Officer. A total of 250 copies are required for general distribution.

Thirdly, I would like to appeal to the members of the Committee to submit draft resolutions as early as possible, especially those that may entail programme budget implications, in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation by the Secretariat of the estimated costs and for consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. Moreover, I wish to emphasize that draft resolutions, amendments and the names of sponsors thereof should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing to ensure accuracy and avoid any possible misunderstandings.

Fourthly, I understand that various regional and political groups may wish to hold consultation meetings during the session. In this regard, requests for use of a conference room for group meetings should also be submitted to the Secretariat in writing as early as possible so that the necessary arrangements can be made in time.

Fifthly, I should also like to draw the attention of the members of the Committee to General Assembly decision 34/401, particularly to its provisions dealing with explanations of vote and the exercise of the right of reply, namely, paragraphs 6, 7 and 8.

Sixthly, as to documentation for the First Committee, information document A/C.1/55/INF.1 will be issued at a later date. This document will list, for the purpose of providing information and acting as a ready reference, all documents before the First Committee issued as of 29 September 2000. That list will be updated as appropriate.

Finally, I would like to ask delegations to kindly submit the list of membership of their delegations to the Secretariat as soon as possible so that the list of membership of the First Committee can be circulated at the earliest possible time.

The Chairman: Does any delegation wish to make further comments or remarks at this stage?

Mr. Anderson (United Kingdom): I spoke briefly during the informal meeting to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman. I should now like, on behalf of my delegation, to formally congratulate you, and the Vice-Chairmen, the representatives of Austria and of Uruguay.

On Tuesday, I asked about the meetings on small arms, and I see that the Ambassador of Mozambique — the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee — is about to speak, and may answer my question. You, Sir, have said that, potentially, you will reserve the afternoon of Friday 6 October for that meeting, which would take place following the end of the work of the First Committee. This seems to me to be a sensible idea. But I wonder whether, given the uncertainty of when the First Committee meeting might end, it would be sensible for us to set a time at which those consultations could take place, so that delegations can be clear about exactly what is going to happen on that afternoon.

The Chairman: In responding to the question raised by the representative of the United Kingdom, I should like to inform the Committee, that, as I mentioned earlier on, the first consultation meeting on small arms will be held on 6 October, in the afternoon, in this room, following the meeting of the First Committee. The afternoon meeting of the First Committee on 6 October will be a short one; I think that it will take only about one hour. So we can say that the consultation meeting will commence at approximately 4 p.m. That will, I think, leave enough time for the consultations.

Mr. Santos (Mozambique): I want to start by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, upon your election, and to say that we look forward to working and collaborating with you in every way that we can for the success of our work. I asked to speak just so that I could express my appreciation for your understanding in allocating time for the inter-sessional consultations on small arms. All members of the Committee are interested in continuing the discussions on this item and are looking forward to participating. You, Sir, have also agreed that if we need to continue the consultations, you would consider allocating more time on other days for such consultations. I think that the item is important enough to warrant such attention, and I sincerely appreciate this time. I look forward to working with you on these and other issues before the Committee.

The Chairman: If no other delegation wishes to take the floor, I propose to adjourn the meeting.

The Committee will begin its substantive work on Monday, 2 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/55/PV.3

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

First Committee
3rd meeting
Monday, 2 October 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

The Chairman: We are delighted to have the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala with us today. We thank Mr. Dhanapala for his presence at the first substantive meeting of the Committee.

In accordance with the adopted programme of work, the Committee will today begin its general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items. Before proceeding to that stage, allow me as the presiding officer of this body to make a statement.

Statement by the Chairman

The United Nations Millennium Assembly is a propitious occasion for reflection, rededication and resolution. Let us, therefore, reflect deeply on the progress we have made so far in the field of arms control and disarmament. Let us rededicate ourselves to our common goals, objectives and priorities. Let us also resolve to take decisive, concrete steps to advance the course of disarmament, both nuclear and non-nuclear, at the dawn of the new millennium.

In the Millennium Declaration, the world's leaders agreed to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons; to take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons; and to address other issues of conventional arms control, including the issue of anti-personnel mines. Directives in the Declaration will be the broad guidelines for our work in the First Committee.

Armament or disarmament — these words originate in our minds. That is why our security perceptions are so important. When it comes to security perceptions, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. All arms control and disarmament issues — be they nuclear, conventional or space weapons — present us with crossroads. We can choose the path towards building up armaments and seeking security therein; or we can choose the path towards arms control and disarmament in the interest of the cooperative security of all parties concerned, with the political and security environment permitting.

The 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferations of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a good example of this. Prior to the Conference, a wide range of negative developments had prevailed and contributed to a prolonged impasse in international arms control and disarmament efforts. Despite all of those negative factors, the nuclear-weapon States in that particular instance upheld broader visions of security perceptions and went the extra mile to demonstrate their political will and flexibility. As a result, the 2000 Review Conference had a positive outcome. I therefore urge that security perceptions and policies of the Member States be reviewed and readjusted so that they may be more conducive to arms control and disarmament and to the maintenance of international peace and security.

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00-66771 (E)

When we look at the progress we have made in the field of arms control and disarmament in the past year, since the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, we find it to be a mixed record. In my view, one major event happened in the year 2000; and another major event has not yet happened. The major event that happened was the significant success of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. You may recall that, prior to the Review Conference, there prevailed a wide range of negative developments that contributed to a prolonged impasse in global, nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament efforts. As a result, predictions for the outcome of the Review Conference had been quite gloomy.

Contrary to these predictions, however, it successfully concluded its deliberations with consensus texts on key issues relating to nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The combined efforts of all States parties to reach consensus and the active contribution of non-governmental organizations led to this positive outcome. Indeed, it was the first time in 15 years that a full consensus was achieved in the form of a Final Document. This Final Document will serve as a sound basis for making further progress in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

It was, indeed, a remarkable achievement that the States parties were able to agree on realistic and practical steps to further nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, matters having a profound impact on the international security of the States parties and on international peace and security. The Conference reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty as the world's primary multilateral instrument for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It also underscored the vital importance of nuclear disarmament and its crucial substantive link to nuclear non-proliferation.

Most importantly, the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament — to which all States parties are committed under article VI — has strengthened their existing obligation under article VI, making explicit for the first time a firm commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, albeit with no time-frame indicated. Furthermore, consensus was also reached that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

These citations clearly reflect the general concern of the international community over the continuing risks posed to mankind by the possible use of nuclear weapons. I should, however, like to sound a note of caution here. There is little ground for euphoria and complacency. May I remind members that crucial tests and tremendous tasks lie ahead of us. The crucial tests will be at the sessions of the Conference on Disarmament, the forthcoming meetings of the NPT Preparatory Committee and the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the sessions of the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and other disarmament forums. We have to wait and see whether the nuclear-weapon States and other States parties will measure up to their commitments in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. So far, the test of the 2000 session of the Conference on Disarmament has been negative. I sincerely hope that the remaining crucial tests will prove to be positive.

The tremendous tasks that lie ahead of us are the effective measures of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation to be undertaken in implementation of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. I sincerely hope that these tasks will be accomplished in an expeditious and satisfactory manner.

Another major event this year was the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work for 2000, let alone to conduct substantive negotiations. It is incumbent on all States members of the Conference on Disarmament to overcome the present impasse and to ensure that the Conference agrees to a programme of work at very beginning of the 2001 session in January next year and starts its substantive work immediately. To that end, all States members of the Conference on Disarmament should go the extra mile in demonstrating their political will and maximum flexibility. What we should do in this Committee is to reflect in our draft resolution on the report of the Conference our strong determination and commitment, in appropriate language, to agreeing to a programme of work and to starting substantive work in the Conference immediately at the beginning of the 2001 session.

At the dawn of the new millennium, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation remain the

highest priorities on our arms control and disarmament agenda. The assignment of the highest priority to the question of nuclear disarmament in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is still valid and relevant.

Significant progress has been made in bilateral nuclear-arms reduction measures taken by the United States and the Russian Federation. We should like to express our deep appreciation for these achievements. We look forward to the early entry into force of START II, to the full and effective implementation of the Treaty by those States and to the commencement of the START III negotiations as soon as possible. We also appreciate unilateral measures taken by other nuclear-weapon States.

The nuclear threat is global; so is the challenge of nuclear disarmament. For this reason, the issues of nuclear disarmament need to be addressed at the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral forum dealing with disarmament, and other multilateral disarmament forums. We fervently hope that we shall be able to make substantive progress in the multilateral context as we enter the twenty-first century.

For several years now, two recurrent draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament, adopted by the General Assembly with the support of the overwhelming majority of the Member States, have called for the establishment of an ad hoc committee or an appropriate subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament. I sincerely hope that this will materialize at the beginning of the 2001 session of the Conference.

There is now an emerging convergence of views that the process of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons should include, among other things, the entry into force and effective implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and, pending its entry into force, a moratorium on nuclear-test explosions; the immediate commencement in the Conference on Disarmament, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and the speedy completion of the draft treaty within the next five years; a phased programme of further deep reductions of nuclear arsenals and effective measures in nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons; and the conclusion of an international legal instrument or instruments on adequate security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

It is therefore imperative that the Conference on Disarmament commence its negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty immediately at the beginning of its 2001 session. Moreover, it is also essential that the question of the preservation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM) be properly addressed. Persistent reports of plans to establish a national missile defence system and of efforts to amend the ABM Treaty have been casting a shadow over the future of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

In this connection, President Clinton's recent decision to pass on to the next United States administration the decision on the deployment of a national missile defence system is helpful and has provided a much-needed opportunity for reconsideration. All States, especially those directly concerned, should use it to the fullest extent to seriously gauge the impact that the deployment of a national missile defence system may have on existing multilateral treaties and on global disarmament itself.

Although the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet entered into force, the number of signatories and ratifying States has steadily increased to 160 and 63 respectively. Nevertheless, of the 44 States whose ratifications are essential for the entry into force of the Treaty, only 30 — among them three nuclear-weapon States: France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom — have so far ratified the Treaty. Three of the 44 States — the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India and Pakistan — have not yet signed the Treaty. I fervently hope that all the States concerned will sign and deposit their instruments of ratification promptly, so as to allow the Treaty to enter into force as soon as possible. Undoubtedly, such actions will contribute in large measure to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Preparatory work for the entry into force of the CTBT continues within the CTBT Organization (CTBTO) Preparatory Commission. I welcome the

agreement to regulate the relationship between the United Nations and the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, which was signed by the Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission on 26 May 2000. The conclusion of the agreement provides the framework for cooperation between the two organizations. The agreement will enter into force upon its approval by the General Assembly, which is expected to be granted during this session.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes an effective measure of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament within specified geographical areas, and it contributes to international peace and security. The magnitude of the geographical areas and the political impact of nuclear-weapon-free zones is very substantial and significant. Nearly half of our planet and nearly two thirds of the countries on the face of the earth are now covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones. We warmly welcome and strongly encourage any genuine efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned.

Recently we have witnessed the undertaking of a new initiative in this respect to establish a single-State nuclear-weapon-free status, or zone. We warmly welcome the declaration of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. I am also delighted to learn that the five nuclear-weapon States will make a joint statement in the First Committee this week, providing security assurances to Mongolia in connection with its nuclear-weapon-free status. We are looking forward to their statement on security assurances.

Let me now touch briefly on banning two other types of weapons of mass destruction. International legal regimes banning chemical and biological weapons are already in place. We need to maintain and strengthen these legal regimes. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has 139 States parties to date. The number of States parties to this Convention is increasing steadily. I understand that the draft agreement on the relationship between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations was approved by the Executive Council of the OPCW on 1 September. The United Nations and the OPCW are expected to sign an agreement this month. I am sure that this will further reinforce the CWC regime and will enhance the already close and cordial relationship between the United Nations and the OPCW.

The Biological Weapons Convention celebrates its twenty-first anniversary this year. The ad hoc group of States parties to this Convention is continuing its work to elaborate the verification protocol to the Convention, with a view to finalizing it next year. I sincerely hope that the States parties will be able to overcome their current divergence of views and to reach agreement as soon as possible on a regime that will strengthen the Convention. Moreover, I believe that the fifth Review Conference of the States parties to the BWC, which will take place some time next year, will provide an opportunity for a timely review of BWC-related developments and for renewing our firm commitment to the elimination of biological weapons.

The proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms is a global phenomenon which is affecting the security, stability and development of many regions of the developing world. Africa has been the region most affected. There civil conflicts have been greatly aggravated by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons.

Since the last session of the First Committee, there has been a growing recognition by the international community of the threat posed to international security, peace and development by the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The urgency of addressing this problem is now being widely acknowledged at the international, regional and national levels. The 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will offer an important opportunity to deal effectively with illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. With the Conference preparatory process already under way, international efforts to combat the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons are gaining momentum. I would like to urge all Member States to demonstrate strong political will in order to ensure that this preparatory process will lead to concrete agreements at the Conference.

Considerable progress has been made in dealing with one particular category of small conventional weapons that has a devastating impact on efforts to rebuild societies after the cessation of hostilities: anti-personnel mines. Casualty figures in key countries have already dropped. The global use and production

of anti-personnel mines are now on the decline, and transfers have almost completely halted.

One of the important global instruments in the field of conventional arms control is the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons — an instrument under which full protocols dealing with specific types of inhumane weapons have been concluded. Preparation will be under way for the review conference of this important umbrella Convention, to be held in 2001. Both the States parties to the mine Convention and the States parties to the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons are actively pursuing the implementation of their respective instruments. However, a great deal still remains to be done.

We have a vision, a vision that is reflected in the Millennium Summit Declaration: to rid the world of nuclear, chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction.

Let us therefore redouble our efforts to translate this vision into reality in a not-too-distant future and thereby advance the cause of disarmament.

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

The Chairman: On behalf of the First Committee, it is my pleasure to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, who will address the First Committee on the opening day of its substantive work.

Mr. Dhanapala (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): My congratulations to the Chairman and the members of the bureau on your election to guide the work of this Committee. Your diplomatic career in the field of disarmament, including your persistent efforts in the field of global nuclear disarmament, equips you well for the tasks ahead; your very comprehensive opening statement is proof enough.

With the opening of the first general debate of this Committee in the new millennium — on a day, 2 October, that also marks the anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi — it is surely appropriate to recall some of the extraordinary events we have witnessed this year. These events remind us of the important contributions this Committee has made and can make in promoting the development of a global rule of law in the disarmament field, even in the face of difficult obstacles.

The urgency of this endeavour is underscored by some harsh realities of our time. The world is simply awash with arms — some 30,000 nuclear warheads on the one hand, some 500 million small arms on the other. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has recently reported that global military expenditure has, for the first time since the end of the cold war, started to rise. The figure for 1999 was roughly $780 billion. Meanwhile, almost half of the world's population lives on less than $2 per day. Let the tragic contrast between these numbers touch the conscience of us all as we embark on our work.

The millennium has provided a unique opportunity for the world community to reflect on these sombre facts. It has stimulated a global inquiry into how each country — indeed each person — can contribute through the United Nations to the improvement of the quality of life on this planet. Members of this Committee will note, in this respect, that their leaders and their citizens who participated in the millennium-related events clearly and unambiguously endorsed the vital need for greater progress on several important disarmament issues.

Earlier this year, the Secretary-General's Millennium Report (A/54/2000) identified two important priorities in this field: the global elimination of nuclear weapons and progress in the control of small arms. These themes, among others, were echoed by over a thousand non-governmental organizations that participated in the Millennium Forum held in May. In August, the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, which I had the privilege of addressing, issued a universal call to abolish all weapons of mass destruction. This call was echoed in early September at the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Culminating all these events, the historic United Nations Millennium Declaration of 8 September stressed the need for progress in eliminating all weapons of mass destruction, ending illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and universalizing legal norms relating to landmines. The Declaration issued after the Security Council's Summit also stressed the "critical importance" of disarmament in the context of post-

conflict situations. We thus have a unique opportunity to convert this vision into reality.

These were not by any means the only positive developments in disarmament this year. Last May, the States parties attending the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreed on practical steps to implement Article VI of the Treaty pertaining to nuclear disarmament. These included an "unequivocal undertaking" by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. They also agreed that the achievement of this goal offers the "only absolute guarantee" against the use of such weapons — a conclusion that strikes at the very foundations of nuclear deterrence and missile defence as alternative security measures. The Final Document also reaffirmed that full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards were a "necessary precondition" for new nuclear supply arrangements — yet another step ahead for this new global norm.

The deliberations in this Committee over the next five weeks will reveal the degree of political will to implement these various undertakings. Because many of these commitments are legally binding, the success of international disarmament efforts will continue to depend heavily upon the rule of law, which requires careful nurturing. We have, for example, a variety of important treaties that still fall short of universal membership or that have not been ratified by key States. The Secretary-General drew attention to this issue during the Millennium Summit and his efforts resulted in several new adherents to six disarmament-related treaties. We have seen progress in recent years with respect to the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II (START II), yet these treaties are still not in force.

We have three States with well-known nuclear weapons capabilities and non-safeguarded nuclear facilities that remain outside the NPT, while many other States parties have not concluded their respective IAEA safeguards agreements, including the Additional Protocol. In his remarks at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the IAEA Director General noted that one State party "remains in non-compliance with its safeguards agreement", and that "the Agency has not been in a position since December 1998 to implement its mandate" under relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions with respect to another State party.

Meanwhile, despite persistent efforts to promote universal membership in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), many States remain non-parties. Other efforts have long been underway to create a verification protocol for the BWC, a goal that, once achieved, will significantly enhance international confidence in full implementation by all States of their obligations under that treaty. With respect to Africa, the number of States parties to the Pelindaba Treaty continues to fall well short of the number required for that treaty to enter into force. And while discussions continue over a possible new nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, significant obstacles prevent the creation of such zones in other key regions, including the Middle East, Central Europe, South Asia, East Asia and the Southern Hemisphere.

The failure once again of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a substantive work agenda this year has also frustrated the negotiation of new international legal norms, as seen in the inability of its members to reach a consensus on terms for multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the fissile material treaty, while efforts to conclude a treaty on negative security assurances continue to languish in that important forum.

In the field of disarmament, it is, of course, difficult to have a functioning rule of law without transparency. In that respect, it is disturbing indeed that the peoples of the world still do not know for certain the number of nuclear weapons around them. The rule of law also presumes the existence of a credible means of enforcement, although the enforcement of disarmament norms remains one of the most difficult challenges facing the international community.

Yet the underdevelopment of the rule of law is perhaps most apparent in the field of nuclear-weapon delivery systems, despite the disarmament goal covering such systems found in the preamble of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). There are some grounds for hope that the international community will take up the challenge noted in April last year by the Secretary-General when he commented on the lack of multilateral norms with respect both to missiles and to missile defences. As international awareness of this problem continues to grow, one can well expect increased multilateral consideration of the issue. A similar problem exists

with respect to other delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction.

With respect to missile defence, the world welcomed the recent decision by the United States to postpone the deployment of a national missile defence system. Efforts must now continue to develop multilateral norms governing existing missile arsenals and the global missile proliferation threat, while preserving the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems as the cornerstone of strategic stability — yet another important goal identified in the final document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The rule of law with respect to conventional arms remains severely underdeveloped, although the convening next year of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects offers an excellent opportunity for significant progress. The extraordinary death and destruction, particularly in the civilian sector, that has resulted from such weapons simply can no longer be ignored by the international community. This makes it all the more important for States to reach an early decision on a date and venue for that important conference and to proceed expeditiously with the business at hand.

I am pleased in that connection to report that I have just returned from witnessing the destruction of more than 1,000 small arms in a "*flamme de la paix*" at Agadez, Niger. That event, along with the moratorium on the import, export or manufacture of light weapons announced two years ago by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), illustrates some of the progressive disarmament activities under way in West Africa. Niger, with its desperate poverty, is endeavouring to nurture a fragile peace and a recently elected democratic Government. The Department for Disarmament Affairs, along with the United Nations Development Programme has proposed to embark on a weapons for development programme, for which the generous assistance of the donor community is urgently needed. Initiatives such as these deserve specific recognition and vigorous support throughout the world community.

Yet, two important United Nations tools for transparency and confidence-building in the field of conventional arms continue to show signs of stagnation and even regression in the face of reluctance by many States to make use of them. An expert group has been examining ways and means to increase participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and I hope that their views will reach a wide audience and will receive close attention by all States that have neglected to use this specific tool. Many countries also have not used the standardized reporting instrument on military expenditures. At a time of rising military budgets, it becomes all the more important to have reliable information about the scope of this particular problem.

With respect to landmines, the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and to the amended Protocol to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects are continuing their efforts to achieve full universality of membership in those important accords. Two weeks ago, in Geneva, the States parties to the mine-ban Convention held their second meeting and addressed several important issues, including victim assistance and the most fundamental goal of disarmament, namely destruction of stockpiles.

The agenda before the First Committee is, in the light of this brief survey, once again challenging and robust. The Committee's work will be closely scrutinized by groups throughout civil society that have played an increasingly proactive role in disarmament discussions, both inside and outside the United Nations system. Those groups help to build a solid foundation of political support for all types of disarmament measures. Their advocacy work parallels disarmament education efforts under way in the United Nations, efforts whose importance the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters has recently underscored. With firm determination backed by support and understanding from civil society, there is indeed potential for progress in all fields of disarmament.

The Committee also has a solemn responsibility to remain vigilant about emerging issues, a task that is performed with the assistance of another important component of the United Nations disarmament machinery: the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), which is now

celebrating its twentieth anniversary. I congratulate its Director, Patricia Lewis, and her small but dedicated staff on their enriching the disarmament community with high-quality research.

I also want to take this opportunity to invite all members of the First Committee to attend a forward-looking discussion meeting hosted jointly by UNIDIR and the Department for Disarmament Affairs on disarmament as humanitarian action, scheduled to be held here in Conference Room 4 on Tuesday, 17 October. That event will explore the extent to which disarmament, whether of weapons of mass destruction or of conventional arms, can be viewed as a question of human security, as an activity with substantial humanitarian benefits. Today it is increasingly apparent that disarmament pays dividends that can serve virtually all the purposes and objectives set out in the Charter.

In the years to come, as disarmament gradually becomes increasingly mainstreamed as a fundamental United Nations activity, as I hope it will, the impact and importance of the deliberations of the First Committee will only grow as a natural result. The ultimate sustainability of disarmament, not just as a fundamental activity of the United Nations but also as a priority for action by national Governments and non-governmental organizations, depends not just on the ideals it inspires, but also on the practical results it delivers.

It is in these realms of norm-building and practical action that the Department for Disarmament Affairs seeks to make its mark. Although we are the smallest department in the United Nations, we have not let our limited resources erode our commitment to excellence and productivity in all our work. Our publications, such as the *Disarmament Yearbook* and the newsletter *DDA Update*, are widely used throughout the disarmament community. We continue to make indispensable administrative and substantive contributions to numerous international disarmament conferences and events. Our regional centres continue to assist in our outreach activities, making disarmament relevant to the practical needs of Member States. We work closely with Member States and with groups from civil society, and are committed to expanding that cooperation. We take our public information and education responsibilities seriously, and will remain a vigorous source of advocacy for all mandated disarmament activities and initiatives.

In that regard, I encourage all delegations to visit the new disarmament exhibit that will be located on the third floor of the General Assembly building. Messenger of Peace Michael Douglas will participate in the opening of the exhibit on 23 October. The Department has also, with the cooperation of the Department of Public Information, jointly produced an excellent documentary film about the global small arms problem entitled "Armed to the Teeth". This documentary, the first of its kind on this global threat, will have its premiere at the United Nations on 16 October in the presence of the Secretary-General, and I highly commend it to all delegations. It is an especially timely production.

Finally, the Department continues to train young diplomats, especially those from developing countries, through the United Nations disarmament fellowship programme. This year's 28 fellows will soon join the ranks of the roughly 500 other officials from more than 150 countries that have participated in the programme since its creation by the General Assembly at its tenth special session, in 1978.

On these encouraging notes, I offer you, Mr. Chairman, my most sincere best wishes for success and my assurances of the full support and cooperation of the Department for Disarmament Affairs in all your work in the weeks ahead.

The Chairman: I thank Mr. Dhanapala for his statement, which I am sure will contribute significantly to the Committee's deliberations.

Agenda items 65 to 81

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. De Icaza (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express, on behalf of my delegation, our satisfaction upon your election, Sir, to the chairmanship of this Committee. We are well aware of your expertise in the field of disarmament and arms control and of your diplomatic skills. We are sure you will conduct our work with great efficiency, and we offer you our support in fulfilling your important task. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

We are grateful to Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for the inspiring message he has been kind enough to deliver to us this morning.

Despite a less than propitious environment due to limited progress and new challenges, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held this year had a long-awaited positive outcome: the unequivocal political commitment given by the nuclear-weapon States to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

This commitment re-established balance in the reciprocal obligations under the Treaty. It facilitated a new understanding between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States and it strengthened the non-proliferation regime of those weapons.

The commitment must now be demonstrated without delay through an accelerated process of negotiations and through the adoption of practical steps to advance systematically and progressively towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Some of those steps are listed in the Conference's Final Document. Others, which are equally important and pressing, may and should be the object of future agreements, such as non-first-use commitments on the part of nuclear-weapon States, legally binding negative security assurances against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon-States and the de-alerting of nuclear weapons and the removal of nuclear warheads from delivery systems.

For the time being, the programme of action agreed in the NPT Review Conference must be fully implemented. The delegation of Sweden, which in this Assembly coordinates the delegations belonging to the initiative "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free World: the need for a new agenda", will state our position in this respect.

In the Final Document adopted at the sixth NPT Review Conference, it was again acknowledged that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned enhances global and regional peace and security, strengthens nuclear non-proliferation regimes and contributes to realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament, including the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We will continue to promote the consolidation of the regimes established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, reiterating our call on the nuclear-weapon States that have not yet done so to ratify the Protocols to those Treaties. We express the hope that the States of Central Asia will in the near future conclude the treaty whereby they will establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region.

We support the consolidation of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, the geographical extension of which will increase as new nuclear-weapon-free zones are established, especially in areas of tension such as the Middle East and South Asia.

This year, we will submit with Australia and New Zealand a draft resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), urging States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty and urging all States to maintain their moratoriums on nuclear-weapon testing pending the Treaty's entry into force.

Mexico is committed to the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. This year Mexico presided over the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction without delay. We look forward to the prompt conclusion of a relationship agreement between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

The year 2001 marks the deadline specified in the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to conclude their negotiation of a protocol that would allow for the verification of compliance with the Convention's provisions. Mexico has approached this negotiation from two fundamental standpoints: strengthening the prohibitions through a broad verification mechanism; and strengthening and promoting international technical cooperation by implementing a series of specific measures that will include, for the first time, the establishment of a cooperation committee within the future organization that will promote, coordinate and review cooperation activities among the States parties.

The consultation process preceding the Convention's Review Conference has already begun. That Conference should be preceded by a special

conference for the adoption of the protocol. However, despite the identification of the main pending issues and the accelerated consultation process, it has not yet been possible to achieve an agreement on key aspects of the protocol, such as transparency visits, inspection triggers, biological agent production and stockpiling thresholds and dual-use technology transfers. The Mexican delegation reiterates once again that the protocol should completely fulfil the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group and consider the priorities of the various States that participate in the negotiation.

We have followed with great interest and no small concern the differences arising around the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems. This is yet another issue that in recent years has eroded détente between the nuclear-weapon States. We recognize the historical importance of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) for strategic stability. That stability is considered indispensable to continuing the gradual process of reducing nuclear weapons on the basis of undiminished security for all parties to the negotiations. We also acknowledge that the archaic doctrines of deterrence and mutually assured destruction no longer make sense and must be abandoned. Finally, we recognize that in recent decades justifiable concerns have emerged about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

Negotiations are needed to address both new concerns and the need to preserve strategic stability. The announcement of the postponement of a decision to deploy a national anti-ballistic missile defence system, made on 1 September by the President of the United States, opens up the possibility for such negotiations to take place. Developments related to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems affect the security of all States. Multilateral and regional initiatives must be promoted to deal comprehensively with this problem.

Mexico supports the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in the summer of 2001. We consider that regional experience in combating the illicit trafficking in and manufacture of those weapons can provide the international community with the necessary foundation for agreement on a programme of action including provisions to strengthen national legislation in this area; marking of arms; export, import and transit licences; strengthening export controls; arms registers; information exchange; technical cooperation and assistance; and provisions for the review mechanism with regard to commitments entered into at the Conference.

We support the holding of informal consultations coordinated by the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, to run parallel to the work of the First Committee, in order to make progress in the consideration of pending procedural and substantive issues. In particular, we believe that an exchange of views must commence on the content of the future programme of action. That will help us better to prepare for the second session of the Preparatory Committee, which is scheduled for next January.

The second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects — to be held in 2001 — must be carefully prepared, for it provides an opportunity to agree on the prohibition or restriction of the use of weapons that have not yet been the subject of a protocol to the Convention. We are actively participating in the preparatory work, and we support prohibitions on the use of cluster bombs and finding solutions to the problem of explosive remnants of war, which kill and maim innocent civilians even after conflicts have ended, hamper humanitarian aid and slow down reconstruction in war-ravaged zones. We are also considering the possibility of proposing restrictions on the use of spent uranium munitions.

Last September we witnessed, for the second time, the global impact of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction on the eradication of those cruel and indiscriminate weapons. Barely two years after its entry into force, there has been a drastic reduction in the number of mine-producing countries, an almost complete halt to exports of those weapons, a steady increase in the destruction of stockpiled mines and an increase in financial resources dedicated to mine action programmes and victim assistance. All that has led to a relative decrease in the number of victims and to more attention being given to their rehabilitation so that they may be fully reintegrated into the daily life of the community.

Notwithstanding the encouraging results so far, we are concerned that the resources mobilized for anti-mine activities are still far from sufficient to meet the identified needs in countries affected by such weapons. There is an urgent need to increase financial and technical assistance for programmes ranging from landmine clearance operations to stockpile destruction and victim assistance. We are certain that the enormous challenge of complying with obligations under the Ottawa Convention within the given timeframe can be overcome with political will and a firm commitment to the humanitarian cause. My delegation calls on those countries that have not yet become parties to the Convention to join the efforts of the international community to strengthen the code of conduct that makes the use or the very existence of anti-personnel landmines unacceptable. As in past years, the countries committed to the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines will submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution inviting all States to sign, ratify and accede, without delay, to the Ottawa Convention.

Once again, the Conference on Disarmament concluded its annual session without beginning any substantive work. This is all the more discouraging because the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreed on the need to establish within the Conference on Disarmament a subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament issues, and urged the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work.

We are not unaware of the difficulties that have emerged on the international scene that hinder the agreements necessary for the Conference on Disarmament to fulfil its role as the sole multilateral negotiating body in this field. We nevertheless express our concern over the stalemate in this most important body, which has, for all practical purposes, lasted for four years. The problem of disarmament and its role in the area of international security cannot wait indefinitely for the Conference to rouse itself from its lethargy. If it continues its inactivity, it will be sidelined; negotiations on arms control and disarmament will have to continue without it.

In this regard, it should be recalled that in the Millennium Declaration the heads of State and Government resolved to keep all options open for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

We would like to express our satisfaction over the agreement reached at the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission on establishing a working group to examine an item entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament". We recognize that the Disarmament Commission is not a body in which binding international instruments on nuclear disarmament can be negotiated, but it is a forum in which different aspects related to this issue can be addressed in an open and constructive fashion. The successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference and the preliminary exchange of views that took place during the last session of the Disarmament Commission illustrate the viability of a multilateral approach to nuclear disarmament.

Mexico reaffirms its support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, despite that fact that no progress made was in past negotiations because of persistent differences of opinion on its objectives and agenda. We, the States Members of the United Nations, should ask ourselves if continuing to postpone the session really serves the best interests of the international community in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security. We are convinced of the imperative need to examine the multilateral disarmament agenda and to take the necessary decisions to strengthen multilateral negotiation mechanisms on disarmament issues.

The efforts of the international community in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation are confronted not only with a deeply rooted culture of violence but also, and in particular since the end of the cold war, a growing complacency, despite existing threats and fresh challenges. Against this backdrop, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters decided by consensus to propose a mandate for the study of educational programmes in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Mexican delegation has decided to sponsor this initiative, and we will be submitting a draft resolution on the subject to this Committee.

The window of opportunity for disarmament and non-proliferation that opened up with the end of the cold war seems to be closing. The climate of détente and of growing confidence and trust in the field of

security among the nuclear-weapon States has been eroded as a result of the war in Kosovo and of the controversy surrounding anti-ballistic missile defence systems. Negotiations on reducing strategic nuclear weapons have come to a standstill. The multilateral disarmament negotiation forum is at a stalemate, and military expenditures worldwide have begun to increase following a decade of major reductions.

In these circumstances, the positive outcome of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is all the more significant. It is with the constructive spirit that prevailed at the Conference that we in the Assembly must build consensus around disarmament and non-proliferation measures that can realistically be implemented in the short term, preserving and strengthening the objectives that together we identified, particularly the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Disarmament and détente are mutually complementary and mutually reinforcing. The reaffirmation by the General Assembly of the outcome of the NPT Review Conference will help to create circumstances conducive to further progress in the area of security and disarmament. It will be of particular importance to confirm that the status quo in nuclear disarmament has changed and that it is now necessary for nuclear-weapon States to comply with their commitments under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Chairman: Since the next speaker, the representative of France, is speaking on behalf of the European Union and a number of other countries, he will be given ample time for his comprehensive statement.

Mr. de la Fortelle (France) (*spoke in French*): I will try not to take advantage of your kindness, Mr. Chairman.

I have indeed the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Economic Area member country Norway, align themselves with this statement.

Allow me first of all, Sir, to congratulate you very sincerely on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. The European Union wishes to assure you of its unconditional support in the discharge of your important task.

The international security situation offers both tremendous prospects and challenges that are inherent to our era. The many efforts under way in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation aim to consolidate international norms and contribute to the maintenance of international peace and stability.

The European Union, desirous of achieving progress towards these objectives, will continue actively to support international efforts in the areas of disarmament, weapons control and non-proliferation, with respect to weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional weapons.

The threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is a fundamental problem. The European Union therefore calls on the international community to commit itself to fight tirelessly against proliferation and to continue its efforts towards disarmament.

For the European Union, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the universal regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the bedrock for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. In this spirit, we support and encourage the implementation of the objectives defined in the Treaty, the decisions of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the results attained by the 2000 Review Conference, as set out in the Final Document adopted by consensus during that Conference. The countries of the European Union are resolved to participate in their full implementation. A total of 187 States are now parties to this Treaty, and we call upon those four States that have not yet done so to accede to the NPT.

The first of the measures called for in the 1995 decision on the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" was adopted in 1996 — the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The importance and urgency of pursuing the signature and ratification process in order to allow for the early entry into force of this Treaty was recalled in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. This is a priority for the European Union. No less than 155 States have signed this fundamental instrument in

the area of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We call upon all States that have not yet done so — and in particular on those appearing on the list of the 44 States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to enter into force — to sign and ratify the CTBT without any further delay. In this respect, we welcome its ratification by Bangladesh, Chile, Mexico, Russia and Turkey, among those States that have ratified it since the last session of the General Assembly.

All the States members of the European Union, including those appearing on the list of the 44 States whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty, have signed and ratified the CTBT. The European Union has spared no effort to ensure that this Treaty enters into force as soon as possible and is of universal scope.

On 29 July 1999, the European Union adopted a Common Position aimed at moving towards this objective. At the Conference held in Vienna last year under article XIV of the CTBT, those countries that have signed and ratified the Treaty reaffirmed their determination to ensure that the Treaty is ratified by all and enters rapidly into force.

The European Union underscores that it fully endorses the efforts made by the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization (CTBTO) to enable the Treaty verification regime to enter into force effectively and as soon as possible.

The negotiation at the Conference on Disarmament of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices — the fissile material cut-off treaty — would be another essential stage in non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It was recommended by the NPT Extension Conference as early as in 1995. The 2000 Review Conference strongly requested the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work providing for the immediate opening of negotiations on a treaty of this type and for the conclusion of those negotiations within the five-year period. This would be a priority for the European Union. The European Union deplores that no consensus has emerged up to now at the Conference on Disarmament to authorize the launching of this negotiation on the basis of a mandate approved in 1995. We call upon States Parties to take all measures to reach that objective as soon as possible.

The European Union wishes to recall its commitment to pursuing the process of expanding the Conference on Disarmament, the only forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament and weapons control, and in particular to include those States members of the European Union still not members of the Conference, as well as four Associated countries that have submitted their request for admission to the Conference.

At the beginning of the last decade, considerable progress was made, through unilateral and bilateral efforts, in reducing nuclear arsenals. Agreements concluded in this area should now be fully implemented and should lead to negotiations towards new reductions, together with measures aimed at guaranteeing greater transparency, irreversibility and confidence. In this respect, the European Union welcomes the ratification by Russia of the 1993 START II Treaty. We hope that this Treaty and its 1997 Protocol will enter into force in the very near future for implementation within the planned timeframe. The member States of the European Union also hope that the negotiations on the future START III Treaty will begin and that the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty will be preserved and strengthened. In this regard, the Union noted with great interest the decision of the United States President not to authorize at this stage the deployment of a national anti-missile defence system.

The level of tension in South Asia remains a cause for concern for the European Union. We call upon the countries of the region to do their utmost to prevent an arms race in the area. We ask both India and Pakistan to join the international community's efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes — namely, by respecting their unilateral commitments not to resume their nuclear testing. We repeat our appeal that they fully implement the concrete measures under Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) that urge the signing and ratification of the CTBT. We welcome the fact that India and Pakistan are ready to participate in negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. We note that India has a system for controlling the exportation of materials, equipment and technologies linked to nuclear weapons, and we invite India to strengthen it. We ask Pakistan to show proof of the same goodwill and to play a positive role in this area.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and to its full implementation. We continue to support efforts to establish a zone in the Middle East, under truly verifiable conditions, totally free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We ask the single State of the region that has not yet adhered to the NPT to ratify and sign it. The European Union feels that accession by all States of the region to the Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons would be an essential and significant contribution to regional and global peace and security. Moreover, we ask all States of the region to conclude an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on full-scope guarantees.

The European Union feels that nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of those regions are important instruments to reinforce the NPT regime. Since this has been asserted in the principles and objectives adopted in 1995 and recalled in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, the establishment and international recognition of zones of this nature strengthen peace and security, both regionally and throughout the world. We await with interest the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty in Africa. We also hope that the discussions between States parties to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and the nuclear-weapon countries will soon produce results so that the latter can adhere to the Protocol annexed to that Treaty. We welcome the progress that has been achieved in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Respect for the NPT is an issue to which the European Union attributes particular importance. The situation in Iraq continues to be a subject for concern, because now, more than nine months since the Security Council adopted resolution 1284 (1999) on 17 December 1999, there has been no effective resumption of monitoring in Iraq. We call upon Iraq to give its full cooperation to the new Commission, as well as to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We reaffirm our concern to see Iraq apply all of the relevant Security Council resolutions and, at the appropriate time, to provide the monitoring bodies — the IAEA or the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) — the necessary access to implement their mandates.

The fulfilment of guarantees by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains a subject of serious concern for the European Union. Despite efforts by the IAEA, none of the important issues outstanding since 1994 have seen any progress, and we call upon North Korea to cooperate with the Agency and to fully implement the IAEA safeguards agreement. The European Union calls also for a financial and technical contribution to the activities of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) on the Korean peninsula.

The European Union welcomes the IAEA's adoption of a model additional protocol to the existing guarantees. Once implemented, the measures contained in this model protocol will have the effect of improving the IAEA safeguards system and will considerably enhance its effectiveness and will allow it to better detect non-declared nuclear activities. The European Union feels that the rapid and complete implementation of this model protocol will be a determining step forward towards the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The European Union and its member States have concluded with the IAEA three additional protocols to the three relevant safeguards agreements, covering the 13 non-nuclear-weapon States and the United Kingdom and France. We will do all we can to complete the ratification procedures as quickly as possible.

The European Union calls on all States that have safeguards agreements with the IAEA to conclude and apply as soon as possible additional protocols to these agreements on the basis of the Model Protocol and to implement the agreements for general guarantees, while assigning due priority to these issues.

The European Union feels that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) marks a decisive stage in the disarmament process. Since its entry into force in 1997, the world has moved towards the abolition of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and the elimination of existing stockpiles and of chemical weapons factories. This process is also helping to reduce real and persistent threats to international peace and security and to world and regional stability. The European Union is nevertheless concerned by the fact

that a large number of signatories have not yet ratified the Convention and that some countries have yet to commit themselves to disarmament and to chemical non-proliferation. It is extremely important that we pursue our common efforts to make that instrument universal. The European Union calls on States that are not parties to the Convention to ratify and accede to it as soon as possible.

The European Union welcomes recent progress in the submission by Member States of their declarations. We stress the importance of the precision and breadth of these declarations to a balanced application of the inspection regime. We call on States to cooperate in the implementation of all the verification measures provided for under the Convention. It is certainly no easy matter to implement a convention as complex as the CWC. It is important that the domestic laws of all States parties on this issue fully respect the requirements of the Convention. The States members of the European Union are ready, to the best of their ability, to provide their expertise to any State party that should request it. This assistance will complement the bilateral aid that several member States are already providing in this area.

The European Union gives priority to strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC). The fulfilment of this objective will depend on the outcome of negotiations, within the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to the Convention, on a legally binding protocol establishing a verification and monitoring regime. The European Union is pursuing its efforts to promote the successful outcome of these negotiations so that the protocol may be adopted as soon as possible by an ad hoc conference of parties to the Convention, which should be held before the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention. We invite States parties to join in this effort.

The States members of the European Union are actively participating in the negotiations of the Ad Hoc Group. They reaffirmed their ongoing commitment by issuing, on 17 May 1999, a Common Position on progress towards the conclusion of the protocol. This covers the following measures or guiding principles that are deemed to be essential to the protocol to the Convention: mandatory declarations and effective follow-up to these declarations in the form of visits; appropriate clarification procedures supplemented, if need be, by on-site activities; provision for rapid and effective investigations through the implementation of all necessary activities; the establishment of a cost-effective and independent organization capable of implementing the protocol effectively; and provision for specific measures in the context of article 7 of the protocol in order to further international cooperation and exchanges in the field of biotechnology. The States members of the European Union feel that such measures, guaranteeing a balance between the demands of verification and respect for the economic and commercial interests of States parties, will provide significant security guarantees that are lacking today.

The European Union hopes that the establishment of a verification and control regime for the 1972 Convention, which would be made possible by the adoption of the protocol next year, will soon complement the progress already achieved in the past 10 years in the field of nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament.

With regard to the struggle against proliferation, the European Union stresses the importance of effective export control mechanisms. It is essential that all exporting States assume their responsibilities and take measures to ensure that the export of materials, equipment and sensitive technologies is subject to an undated monitoring and control mechanism. An effective export control system will provide guarantees for the peaceful use of goods, technologies and materials and thus facilitate cooperation in areas affected by technological progress.

The European Union remains convinced that the transparency of export control regimes, which are based on decisions made in the context of national sovereignty, can be promoted by dialogue and cooperation. We support the efforts being made towards transparency by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and the Australia Group. The European Union welcomes the establishment of the round-table mechanism with non-member States under the Missile Technology Control Regime. This mechanism should allow broader dialogue with those States and enhanced transparency.

The European Union wishes to stress its concern about ballistic proliferation in the context of the campaign against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that we should be moving towards the definition and design of ways to strengthen

the multilateral instruments governing that type of proliferation.

The destabilizing accumulation and distribution of small arms is another cause of great concern to the European Union. The illicit trade in small arms is closely linked to the excessive and destabilizing stockpiling and transfer of these weapons. The 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects should address violations of law currently in force on weapons and import-export controls, together with the underlying factors that prompt the excessive and destabilizing stockpiling and transfer of such weapons, including those factors covered in the reports of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts. Thorough work in the preparatory phase of the Conference should allow the adoption of a comprehensive and integrated approach to security and development.

In this respect, the European Union openly favours a broad and general scope for the international Conference, which is to be convened under General Assembly resolution 54/54 V, with a two-pronged approach of prevention and reduction. The Conference should offer an opportunity, on the one hand, to consider effective means to combat and ultimately eliminate destabilizing stockpiles and distribution of small arms and light weapons, and, on the other, to contribute to the reduction of existing stockpiles to levels compatible with States' legitimate security needs.

The European Union will prepare for the Conference with the aim of attaining significant and important results, including a programme of action covering all spheres potentially subject to international cooperation on small arms and light weapons. One part of this programme could be the drafting of guidelines or a legally binding instrument. At the first session of the Preparatory Committee, the European Union submitted a working paper containing components or chapters for consideration in the preparatory work for the 2001 Conference. The European Union feels that substantive work under the various chapters should cover prevention and reduction, including measures within the context of post-conflict efforts. Similarly, every chapter should allow the consideration of those aspects that are related to supply and demand. This issue should also be addressed from an economic and social point of view, and in its aspects related to development.

The European Union (EU) appreciates the efforts made by the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee to carry out comprehensive, thorough consultations regarding the second session of the Preparatory Committee and the 2001 conference itself. Those efforts take into consideration the instruments already agreed upon by consensus within the United Nations, particularly the report of the Government experts regarding the objective of the conference. In view of the time-frame, the Committee has also presented a new working paper that elaborates on the elements or chapters that were stressed at the first official meeting of the Preparatory Committee. The document submitted by the Chair at the informal consultations, which were held in New York from 17 to 19 July 2000, brings together regional approaches to the process and the dynamic that derives from the intersessional programme of work. The text will also serve to prepare the work on the substantive issues, such as the programme of action and the principles that the conference should adopt. One of the EU's significant contributions to the outcome of the 2001 United Nations conference is its support of the candidacy of Sir Michael Weston for the chairmanship of this conference.

According to the European Union's way of thinking, the current session of the First Committee should take full advantage of the momentum that has been created and focus on the procedural aspects of the conference, so that organizational matters can be settled in a satisfactory manner. Once the procedural issues have been resolved, the Preparatory Committee can, at its second session, devote itself to substantive issues. We therefore call upon all States to take part in these efforts.

In the framework of the general strategy to deal with the problem of light weapons, on 15 November 1999 the Council of the European Union adopted a decision to allocate up to 500,000 euros to promote the control, collection and destruction of weapons in Cambodia. The Council of the European Union, on 17 December 1999 decided that the EU will contribute to fight against the destabilizing stockpiling and spread of small arms and light weapons in Mozambique. Financial aid of 200,000 euros has been earmarked for the transborder operations being jointly carried out by the South African and Mozambican police forces. This operation, known as Operation Rachel, involves the

location, collection and destruction of weapons in Mozambique.

As for the transfer of weapons, it is essential to carry out responsible policies if we wish to resolve the problem of light weapons. The Code of Conduct for Arms Exports, which was adopted by the Council of the European Union on 8 June 1998, establishes high standards for the administration of conventional-weapons transfers by the member States of the EU, who are invited to show restraint.

The EU on 3 November 1999 issued its first annual report on the implementation of the Code. The experiences of member States have been positive. The Code has established among Governments a new transparency in the transfer of weapons and enabled them to act in a more concerted fashion in the scrutiny, at the national level, of applications for authorization to export weapons. The Code has also provided member States a framework for discussing their common concerns when matters relating to regional stability and human rights are at stake. Other countries outside the Union have also acceded to the Code. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, and Canada have also endorsed the principles of the Code. The EU calls upon other countries to follow suit. The EU is continuing its efforts to enhance the effectiveness of this important measure. On 13 June 2000, the Council of the European Union adopted the common European schedule of military *matériel*.

In June 1997, the EU adopted a programme for the prevention of illicit trafficking in conventional weapons and for combating this trafficking. On 9 December 1999, the Council of the European Union adopted the second annual report on the actions undertaken in the framework of the programme. This report emphasized that it is increasingly necessary to address the problems related to the illicit trafficking in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in regions where there is unrest and where there has just been a crisis. The member States of the EU are making their contribution to resolving these problems by implementing national projects, by taking actions and implementing strategies under the auspices of the EU, and by taking an active part in the work of international organizations. This latter work includes projects such as the action taken by the United Nations in South-Eastern Europe, the draft protocol of the United Nations on firearms, and regional projects, particularly in Africa.

The contribution of the EU to combating the destabilizing stockpiling and spread of small arms and light weapons has been guided by the standards for common action adopted on 17 December 1998. The objectives of this action are to combat the destabilizing stockpiling and spread of light weapons, to help reduce existing stocks to levels that meet legitimate security needs, and to help resolve the problems caused by the stockpiling of such weaponry. This means seeking international consensus on certain principles and contributing to specific actions.

The EU underscores the importance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. This is not only a confidence-building measure of international scope that promotes stability and security; this measure also encourages regional efforts to enhance transparency. However, the value of the Register depends on the extent of participation in it. The Union calls on all States to file, on time, the declarations registering their exports and imports and — so as to enhance the transparency and value of the Register — to provide information about their military resources and about purchases related to national production. The inclusion of such information will make it possible for the United Nations Register to be more comprehensive and useful. In the absence of transfers, declarations to this effect — declarations such as "none" — will also help guarantee transparency. The EU hails the work of the Group of Governmental Experts which met this year to recommend ways of improving the functioning of the Register; however, the EU regrets that the experts have not been able to agree on most of the measures that have been discussed. In this context, the EU reiterates its support for the strengthening of the Register, for its scope to be extended as soon as possible, and for it to become universal. In this regard, the EU also welcomes the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions.

Last year's Ottawa process was a success: the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction entered into force on 1 March 1999. The EU welcomes the fact that a large number of States have signed the Convention and acceded to it, which allowed it to enter into force quickly. The EU

notes with satisfaction that progress has continued since the entry into force of the Convention. Since the beginning of this year, 17 countries have joined the list of States parties, bringing to 107 the total number of States parties.

The EU underscores the importance of the full and rapid implementation of the Ottawa Convention, in particular with regard to the obligations to provide information and firm time limits for the destruction of anti-personnel landmines in mined areas and mine stocks and to assist victims.

In addition, the EU calls upon all States to work together to achieve the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines throughout the world. In this context, we would like to underscore the importance of the opportunity that the Convention, since its entry into force, offers to the signatory States to implement its provisions.

The EU fully supports the conclusions of the second meeting of the States parties that was held in Geneva from 11 to 15 September. In particular, the EU supports the reform of the intersessional programme of work that was adopted. The EU will continue its efforts to call on countries that manufacture anti-personnel landmines to refrain rigorously from exporting that type of weapon.

The European Union remains seriously concerned about the suffering that anti-personnel landmines continue to inflict on civilian populations and is determined to participate in international efforts to eliminate these weapons and to put an end to the humanitarian problem they cause. The commitment of the European Union is based on joint action, which was adopted just before the 1997 Ottawa Conference and sets the framework for specific action and financial contributions by the European Union for mine clearance activities, together with community programmes of development aid and rehabilitation.

The European Union is the main donor worldwide as concerns mine clearance, aid to victims and other activities related to landmines. In 1999 the European Commission and the member States allocated more than 103 million euros to activities relating to landmines. Contributions to community devices for mine clearance and for aid to victims amounted to approximately 29.9 million euros. The European Commission recently adopted a communication to the European Parliament and Council that describes the measures that will further enhance the catalytic role being played by the Union in combating anti-personnel landmines. The goal of the European Union is, at the very least, to maintain the level of its contribution for future actions, namely to allocate a budget of 185 million euros to combating anti-personnel mines between 2000 and 2006.

While duly taking humanitarian concerns into consideration, the European Union will focus its financial and technical assistance on States parties and on States signatories that fully abide by, in practice, the principles and objectives enshrined in the Ottawa Convention.

The European Union considers that, in order to spread and use more wisely the resources available for combating anti-personnel landmines, there must be better coordination of actions undertaken at the international level. The European Union supports the role of central coordinator that the United Nations has assumed in its United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). The European Union underscores that the responsibility for combating anti-personnel landmines ultimately falls on national authorities in the country concerned. The Union therefore feels it particularly important to help countries to set up competent domestic structures and operational ways and means for mine clearance. In this respect, the European Union adopted on 9 November 1998 a decision concerning specific action in the sphere of assistance in mine clearance in Croatia and calls upon the Western European Union to put it into practice. The mission is clearly designed to give support, in terms of advice, technical competence and training, to the anti-mine efforts in Croatia. On 13 April 2000, the Council of the European Union decided to extend by one year the mandate of this mission. In the joint strategy regarding Ukraine, adopted in December 1999, the European Union committed itself to studying in 2000 the means of helping this country abide by its obligations under the Ottawa Convention.

The European Union awaits with interest the Second Annual Conference of the States Parties to Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. It is important for States parties to communicate the national reports that they have been called upon to produce to the Conference beforehand, and we

encourage States signatories to do so spontaneously. The European Union calls upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols, particularly to Amended Protocol II, concerning landmines, and Protocol IV, concerning blinding laser weapons.

As Europeans we have to take the lead in taking responsibility for events which occur on our own continent. Europe must also draw up a European Security and Defence Policy capable of strengthening its external actions while maintaining full observance of the principles of the United Nations Charter. Last December in Helsinki, the heads of State and Government emphasized the determination of the European Union to develop a decision-making capacity, under the leadership of the European Union, that is completely independent in terms of civil and military crisis management.

The European Union has drawn up a comprehensive objective: by 2003, member States must be in a position to rapidly deploy and to support and sustain forces capable of carrying out all the so-called Petersberg missions, with a force of up to 50,000 or 60,000. Under the French presidency, a conference on the deployment of forces will be held on 20 November in Brussels to endorse the catalogue of forces of the 15 partners of the European Union that could allow the Union to reach this comprehensive objective.

The European Union will also seek to enhance its effectiveness in civilian aspects of crisis management. A civil crisis management committee was thus set up this past spring. Increasing our civilian police capacity has also been given high priority. Member States have set an objective: to provide up to 5,000 police officers for international missions covering operations of conflict prevention and crisis management. Within this comprehensive objective, member States undertake to be in a position to deploy 1,000 police officers within a 30-day period, so as to meet the need to have a rapid deployment capability. Our objective is to give the Union the capability of producing a prompt reaction to international crises using the entire gamut of instruments available to it, civilian or military. This capability must be regarded as an integral part of our foreign policy and joint security policy.

Interaction and complementarity between the military and civilian branches demonstrate the global approach of the European Union when it comes to crisis management. They also demonstrate our willingness to contribute to international peace and security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, and in cooperation with the United Nations and other organizations that play a central role in the structure of European security, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The OSCE is the only European organization where, in the sphere of security, participating States cover a geographical zone that goes from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, together with cooperation in the spheres of the economy and the environment with a view to prevent crises, are as important for maintaining peace and providing stability as political and military issues. The OSCE derives its strength from the fact that it represents a common platform for 54 States. It can detect conflicts at early stages and prevent their development, and each day it seeks to defend human rights and the rights of minorities, democracy, the independence of the media and the organization of free and regular elections. The European Union attaches particular importance to the success of actions carried out or scheduled by the OSCE in the field to control weaponry with a view to alleviating local tensions or to promoting the implementation of agreements.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the Charter for European Security was adopted at the Istanbul Summit, on 18 and 19 November 1999. The Charter for European Security is intended to build a new, democratic, peaceful and united Europe, free of any divisions, based on a cooperative approach to security, equality and solidarity between and among States, regardless of their belonging to security structures or arrangements and in full observance of the principles of the OSCE. It reaffirms the statute of the OSCE and the status of that body as an inclusive forum to promote security based on cooperation and helps enhance the capability of the organization to carry out its mission and coordinate its action with other international players. The platform for cooperative security, which is a fundamental component of the Charter, in this respect offers interesting prospects for cooperation and closer cooperation without any sort of hierarchy among the various international organizations and institutions.

At the Istanbul Summit, the European Union welcomed the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the review of the Vienna Document on confidence and security-building measures. As in the past, these documents remain the cornerstones, conventionally speaking, of European security. These decisions help strengthen European security. The adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces is the culmination of efforts at negotiation undertaken since 1996 and reflects in the new limitation measures on heavy weaponry the real circumstances for security in Europe following the cold war. Here, new measures to enhance military transparency and to prevent crises reflect the determination of States signatories. The review of the Vienna Document is part of an ongoing process that began in 1990; that process is also aimed at enhancing military transparency, and we welcome it.

The European Union calls upon nations to spare no effort to attain those fundamental objectives: disarmament and non-proliferation. Multilateral work to that end must continue and must be stepped up as far as possible. The European Union hopes that at its present session the First Committee will contribute to that purpose, committed to the mission of the Organization: to consolidate peace and security through international cooperation.

Mr. Salander (Sweden): I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of the delegations of the New Agenda initiative: Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Sweden. First of all, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman of this year's session of the First Committee.

In May this year, the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) adopted a consensus Final Document. Never before have the parties reached agreement on such a broad set of measures designed to achieve the purposes of the Treaty and the implementation of its provisions. Such a result could not have been foreseen given the diverging approaches and perspectives in the years preceding the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. A body blow was dealt to the non-proliferation regime by the nuclear tests in South Asia in 1998. There appeared to be considerable doubt as to whether the principles and objectives agreed to in 1995 had been false gifts offered in exchange for the indefinite extension of the Treaty, and there were growing doubts as to whether all the States parties possessed the degree of commitment necessary to seriously advance nuclear disarmament.

Yet, at the very moment when the future of the Treaty and its non-proliferation regime appeared to be almost in jeopardy, the States parties demonstrated a singular and common purposefulness. They rallied to confirm the objectives and purposes of the Treaty, and unambiguously determined to bolster the global non-proliferation regime. The positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference was made possible because the States parties definitively agreed to engage in nuclear disarmament as an achievable goal without further procrastination or prevarication. The five nuclear-weapon States, for their part, entered into a far-reaching political commitment. They have now made an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. While the Conference reaffirmed that the ultimate objective of States in the disarmament process is general and complete disarmament, the commitment entered into in 2000 was to the singular pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

Thus, the nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT have finally agreed to proceed towards the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world. What had hitherto been implicit has thus become explicit, and with this act the Treaty is both reinforced and revitalized as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. With this commitment and agreement on the measures required to achieve our common goal, the States parties are well placed to proceed with the achievement of our shared objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

We would have preferred to see greater detail and, in certain cases, more specific mandates contained in the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference. Nevertheless, we consider that the measures agreed all constitute essential elements which must be pursued in parallel by the nuclear-weapon States themselves and by both the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States working together. With such a clear road map, the States concerned in each case must steel themselves to the task of further elaborating each measure within the parameters of the mandates set and of advancing the negotiation and implementation of each instrument or arrangement, be it at the bilateral, the plurilateral or the multilateral level.

Of course, many of the measures included in the outcome of the Review Conference were already well rehearsed. That outcome includes the existing bilateral process between the United States and the Russian Federation, and it also addresses sub-strategic systems. It encompasses the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the conclusion of a fissile-material treaty; at the same time, it anticipates the need to begin preparations for guaranteeing a world free of nuclear weapons through the development of verification mechanisms. It opens a new chapter by addressing issues related to the role of nuclear weapons in the interim until they are eliminated, including questions of operational status, and it entrenches the principle of irreversibility in disarmament measures. It opens the door to greater transparency.

But, what is novel and unprecedented is the recognition that all issues relating to the nuclear disarmament process, including questions of a diminishing role for nuclear weapons and of reducing their operational status, are recognized as the concern of all States parties and have for the first time been jointly addressed by all the States parties, even if the implementation of steps to give effect to undertakings in this regard lies primarily with the States directly concerned.

There is a range of instruments which must be urgently concluded and brought into force if we are to achieve nuclear disarmament. All States must contribute to this process, to which we have committed ourselves. The deficit in respect of the bilateral arms reduction process must be addressed by the parties as a matter of priority. START II has not entered into force. We welcome the significant step taken by the Russian Federation in ratifying START II. That treaty and its 1997 protocols must now enter into force. The commencement of START III negotiations must lead the way in demonstrating the unequivocal commitments entered into earlier this year, while at the same time preserving the international stability which the integrity of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems promotes.

We welcome the steps already taken by some of the five nuclear-weapon States with lesser nuclear arsenals. Continuing restraint by those States and further unilateral steps by all nuclear-weapon States will contribute to the early achievement of the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Multilaterally, measures agreed to as early as 1995 have been pending for too long. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, concluded in 1996, has still not entered into force. Negotiations on a fissile-material treaty remain stalemated, and the prospects for legally binding security assurances for States parties against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons have become hostage to new doctrines. The agreement at the NPT Review Conference on introducing interim measures in the interval until nuclear weapons are eliminated necessitates action by the nuclear-weapon States and their allies. The international community will closely follow the implementation of these responsibilities by the States concerned.

As we meet here less than four months after the NPT 2000 Review Conference, it is clearly too early to expect results from the commitments and the undertakings so recently agreed. However, we can have no illusions that the success of the Review Conference has brought about a quickening in the pace of multilateral negotiations. The Conference on Disarmament continues to be locked in the stalemate of the previous three years. Hence, there were once again no fissile material treaty negotiations this year, nor is there yet much promise for negotiations next year. Entry into force of the CTBT remains as remote as before. When will be begin to deal with nuclear disarmament multilaterally? We cannot allow this stalemate to continue.

So where does the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime stand today? The patient is not cured, but a diagnosis has been made and a remedy prescribed. What remains is to make sure that the patient takes the medicine and that the patient reacts as expected. The NPT still lacks universal adherence. The seven Ministers of the New Agenda Coalition, meeting here in New York last month, focused on this issue and called for the redoubling of efforts by the international community to achieve universal adherence to the Treaty. They repeated their earlier calls to those three States which are not parties to the NPT and which operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States and to place their nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Our Ministers stress the importance of full compliance by the parties with all the provisions of the NPT.

What was adopted at NPT 2000 is the property of all the States parties to the Treaty. Our seven delegations have come to this session of the First Committee with the intention of working together with the other delegations here present so that this will be underpinned by the United Nations in a resolution of the General Assembly. The resolution we will present to the Committee will reflect the outcome of the recent Review Conference. It will be set in the context of the commitment made by the nuclear-weapon States, which we have duly welcomed. It will accept the compromises which all parties made to achieve a common purpose and common future agenda. It will anticipate the achievement of an instrument, or a set of instruments, required to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. It will offer no illusory fixes, but it will promise the consistent scrutiny of progress achieved and of any opportunities squandered.

Our seven Governments are determined to continue working together with all other countries to maintain vigilant oversight of the implementation of each of the agreed elements and to develop new approaches and new tasks where we consider these constructive and necessary to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): We congratulate you on assuming the chair of this important Committee, Sir. You know that you can count on the full support of New Zealand in the pursuit of a productive and successful session.

For those of us who are determined to work for real progress on disarmament this has been another year of mixed results and good and bad news. Regrettably, the inventory of unfinished business on disarmament remains depressingly long.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still eludes us. Negotiations on the Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention are inching forward, but the pace of negotiation appears to be faltering. Adherence to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) additional protocols is proceeding too slowly. We are still no further ahead in negotiating a ban on the production of fissile material. A subsidiary body on nuclear disarmament has yet to be established in Geneva. Further movement on the START process appears to have stalled. Ratification of nuclear-weapon-free zones is still not complete. The Chemical Weapons Convention is not universal in all regions. Greater transparency in nuclear holdings has yet to manifest itself adequately. Universalization of the Ottawa mine-ban Convention is some time away. There is a lack of progress in establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones. While the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is being tackled at the regional levels, preparations for a United Nations Conference next year and an international action plan have been marred by procedural manoeuvres.

Our responsibility must be to remind our authorities of the continuing gaps in the implementation and universalization of existing instruments. While progress was made recently at the Millennium Summit in consolidating support for existing treaties, repeated calls in this Committee for action require a better response. In pressing for new initiatives on disarmament, we must remain seized also of the real deficit in existing performance. Steps need to be taken to reduce this deficit, which is becoming an issue of credibility as well. It is a challenge for everyone to grapple with.

An ongoing priority for New Zealand this year will be working with our New Agenda partners in tabling a draft resolution that seeks to underpin the outcome of the review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We shall be working closely with Australia, Mexico and Japan on a CTBT draft resolution calling for the early implementation of this crucial Treaty. And, with Brazil, we shall be sponsoring a draft resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament, yet again, to reach consensus on its programme of work was conspicuously evident this year. We came close, tantalisingly close, to reaching agreement. That would not have been possible without the flexibility of some delegations and the very commendable efforts of the Conference on Disarmament Presidents this year. But it was, once again, just not enough.

The Conference on Disarmament cannot distinguish itself with failure for yet another year in 2001. We all know it has gone through periods in the past when negotiations have not been possible. It cannot mass-produce treaties with clockwork precision. Pre-negotiation is clearly required on some issues and should not be undervalued.

Despite evident shortcomings in its working methods, which require attention, we cannot realistically hold the institution itself responsible for failure. Accountability rests squarely with the Governments of its 66 Member States.

But another year of inaction is not encouraging for a body that claims to be the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. There are now risks to the Conference's credibility. And a body that does not produce results in today's world may begin to have a hard time convincing the General Assembly to allocate resources to it.

New Zealand remains totally committed to multilateralism and to negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. We regard our membership as an act of faith. The Conference has delivered results in the past. The challenge now is to prove that it is still capable of doing so. If it does not, advocates of progress may look elsewhere. And the primacy of the United Nations may have to be asserted, as was demonstrated recently in the Millennium Summit call for convening an international conference.

Thankfully, negotiations are proceeding in Geneva on a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention to ensure compliance with that treaty's prohibitions. However, after almost six years of negotiations, the pace of the Ad Hoc Group's work now appears to be faltering in the balance. New Zealand's endeavours remain directed towards completion of that important disarmament imperative as soon as is practical. Like all negotiations, the protocol must reflect a fair bargain between the varying positions. But we would prefer a more potent one than a bargain in which neither compliance nor cooperation objectives are met properly. To ensure that the protocol can be an effective watchdog against bio-warfare proliferation, it must have the prerequisites of a sensitive nose to sniff out proliferators, a loud bark to alert the international community and, when necessary, sufficient bite to deter those who would cheat on the prohibitions of the Convention.

We remain strongly committed to those goals, but we are disturbed by those who talk of compliance activities aimed at others, but persistently resist accepting that transparency requires reciprocity if it is to be credible. The same applies for those who call for the abolition of arrangements that help ensure compliance.

We are pleased that dealing with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is now being addressed in earnest. Already, at regional, subregional and national levels it is recognized that this problem is a multi-faceted one that is complicated by interacting disarmament, humanitarian, law and order, developmental and other dimensions. Its characteristics, causes and solutions vary from community to community. Recent events in our region have challenged Governments to focus on the roots of violent conflict, which go much deeper than the issue of the weapons themselves.

There will need to be recognition at the multilateral level that the small arms problem will not be amenable to a quick-fix solution. Most immediately, there is the challenge of reaching agreement on a large number of outstanding issues in the firearms protocol negotiations in Geneva later this month. Dealing with small arms will be a long-haul exercise requiring a holistic approach. The United Nations Conference next year will be another step in the right direction. It may be, however, that the most effective multilateral response will be to support action at the sharp end, where the laborious but essential task is engaging communities in tackling a problem that turns their streets into combat zones. At the same time, the Conference might usefully direct its attention to existing international law, where this might be relevant to dealing with the proliferation of these weapons.

The Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines, although not analogous, has been successful in this respect. The treaty constitutes a political framework for the practical struggle to rid the world of this hidden killer. Two and a half years after entry into force, there are many signs that anti-personnel mine use is now on the wane. One hundred and sixty-eight million square metres of land have been cleared, and in the last year 22 States parties completed destruction of their stockpiles.

But much more needs to be done. New Zealand wants to see universalization of this treaty, not least because of its clear humanitarian impact. We are not attracted to, and will not support, partial solutions on transfers once a new international norm has been created. And the international community might take a deep breath and re-examine the strengthening of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. An issue that might usefully be addressed in this context is how to deal with unexploded remnants of war.

A particular achievement this year was the outcome of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It came after the deplorable challenges to the non-proliferation regime that took place in 1998 in South Asia. The pressure to breathe new life into the NPT Treaty has been strong, and the good news is that all parties to it responded constructively and positively. That outcome has bolstered confidence in the NPT regime, and for New Zealand it confirmed that our optimism about enhancing international security through disarmament was not misplaced.

The new and unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons is a source of particular satisfaction. We should be in no doubt that it is a singular step forward. It has removed for all time any ambiguity regarding whether nuclear weapons can be retained indefinitely. The total elimination of nuclear weapons can no longer be regarded as contingent on what is now the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament.

There were other no less significant outcomes at the Review Conference, in particular the practical steps for nuclear disarmament. The agreement for greater transparency, reductions in tactical weapons, concrete measures to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons and the application of the principle of irreversibility, for example, break new ground. They provide a much more coherent basis to achieve real progress in nuclear disarmament.

The NPT outcome cannot be regarded as an end in itself. There can be no stepping back from what was agreed. Nor can we accept that somehow the NPT outcomes exist in a vacuum or are quarantined by the confines of the Treaty's review process. Action on these new undertakings will take time, and we are realistic about that. While we are not questioning the commitments to them, the real test will be in the delivery. What we shall be looking for is evidence that these agreed steps are being pursued and implemented. In this process we want to see a sense of determination manifest itself. New Zealand will keep pushing for progress, together with our New Agenda partners and supporters.

Moving to the total elimination of nuclear weapons should now become operative policy. Justification for retaining these weapons permanently is no longer sustainable. We look forward to the commitments agreed at the NPT Review Conference finding expression in the policies of those States directly involved.

The concept of strategic stability has been given heightened attention this year. It is an issue that goes to the heart of the ongoing debate on missile defence. New Zealand has concerns about the possible deployment of a missile defence system if it were to retard or, worse, unravel the disarmament effort. We believe that great caution needs to be exercised in decisions that could have a negative impact on disarmament and arms control, and we would urge equal caution in ensuring that these decisions are not inconsistent with the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The integrity and validity of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty must be preserved. Measures that would undermine the Treaty's purpose of contributing to the creation of more favourable conditions for negotiations on further strategic arms reductions should be avoided.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems has an impact on the security of all States, however. New Zealand considers that the best front line of defence lies in accelerating the process for the total elimination of nuclear weapons; strengthening the NPT and the supporting non-proliferation regime; fully implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention; delivering a sufficiently effective compliance regime for biological weapons; strict control on access to missile technology and components; and exploring other collective or multilateral options.

Every country has the right to determine its own security and defence needs. But unilateralism cannot guarantee international security, which is a collective concern and a collective responsibility. In assessing international security, we should be careful about placing qualifications on progress or, worse, misappropriating strategic considerations to conceal procrastination on disarmament.

Signs of hesitation about the utility of multilateral solutions are disturbing. It would be wrong, in our view, not to pursue the opportunities and benefits of collective responses and action. The pursuit of the new NPT undertakings should be a vital determinant for delivering enhanced security. Bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral engagement are absolutely essential.

Reinforcing our existing disarmament architecture is no less an imperative.

This year's NPT outcome provides one of the most comprehensive set of undertakings we have ever had for moving ahead and for delivering international peace and security. Let us be clear at this time that disarmament is a security-building process and not an optional extra.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) *(spoke in Spanish)*: May I begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your election to preside over the work of the First Committee. I wish also to extend congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and to thank the Ambassador of Chile, Mr. Raimundo González, for the efforts he made during the previous session.

I should also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, for being with us and for the statement he made this morning, and for the work and dedication of his entire team.

The twentieth century was a time of war and revolution, of weapons of mass destruction and arms races. Resources were siphoned off that should have been channelled into development, and the environment deteriorated. But the twentieth century was also a time when peoples sought, through dialogue, cooperation and integration, to establish lasting peace and security. The twentieth century was also a time when major, signal commitments were entered into and enshrined in international legal instruments.

Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the international community has been, and continues to be, fully committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons. This commitment on the part of the 187 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was reaffirmed at the recent Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and took the form of practical steps to carry forward systematic, gradual endeavours to give effect to article VI of that Treaty.

In this regard, it is vital to implement those practical steps, particularly the appeal to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the immediate start-up of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The international community continues to be committed to the elimination of chemical and biological weapons, and to the prompt conclusion of a Verification Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention.

Making legal instruments on non-proliferation, disarmament and weapons of mass destruction universal in scope should be our objective for this nascent twenty-first century, because only in that manner will it be possible to lay the foundation for mutually guaranteed security as a primary goal.

The excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, particularly small arms, together with the devastating effects of anti-personnel mines, have been a source of concern in recent years because of their highly adverse effects on human security and on sustainable development. The only way to ensure that the efforts of the United Nations to resolve violent conflicts are not thwarted is to address the question of the instruments of violence — in other words, those weapons that affect the daily life of millions of people, particularly women and children. Hence it is a high priority to convene an international Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects no later than 2001.

The problem of anti-personnel mines is far from being resolved, but at least the international community has taken substantive steps, mainly within the framework of the Ottawa Convention banning landmines, in favour of mine clearance on humanitarian grounds and to promote the prohibition of these weapons throughout the world.

Given this scenario, as in the past, dialogue, cooperation and integration continue to be needed. Fully aware of this need, Argentina has adopted an international policy based on the strengthening of integration with neighbouring countries, the intensification of dialogue in the hemisphere, the banning weapons of mass destruction, an increasing limitation on certain types of conventional weapons and participation in the international arena, with a view to bringing about a peaceful, stable world based on the values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, free markets and international cooperation.

The democracy, integration and transparency equation has had a multiplier effect that redounds to the benefit of inter-State relations. The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile zone of peace is a reflection of the peaceful, cooperative security space necessary to our development. This approach of dialogue and

cooperation also prompts our participation in regional, hemispheric and international forums. Thus Argentine foreign policy is geared to promoting the elaboration of multilateral agreements that will reduce the threats to peace and facilitate comprehensive development, in a spirit of solidarity, among peoples.

If these agreements were to be based on more democracy in international relations, we are convinced that their effectiveness and lasting value would be enhanced.

It is now more complex than in the past to maintain international peace and security. Nonetheless, this should not be cause for paralysis; on the contrary, it should create greater impetus. General Dwight Eisenhower once said:

> "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.
>
> "This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."

This statement, from "The Chance for Peace" speech delivered on 16 April 1953, is a sound affirmation, and we have to bear its message in mind as we go about our work. When all is said and done, the possibility of a better world, with a minimum of weaponry to ensure the rightful self-defence of peoples, can begin here and now, in this very Conference Room, by creating a climate conducive to dialogue and mutual understanding, thus ultimately bringing about the political will necessary for us all to benefit from a better future.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): It is a great honour for me to speak before the Committee on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam. At the outset, I wish to express our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. The ASEAN countries are very pleased and proud to see you, a representative of an ASEAN member country, discharging this important responsibility. We are confident that, under your guidance, the work of the First Committee at this session will be brought to a fruitful conclusion. We wish also to extend our warmest congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

The fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly takes place at a momentous juncture in the history of the United Nations. We have very successfully concluded the Millennium Summit. The Millennium Declaration, which contains the commitments of our heads of State and Government, is a precious document. It will surely be the guideline for our work this year and for many years to come.

The ASEAN countries believe that the issues of nuclear weapons and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are the highest priorities on the agenda of the United Nations in the field of arms control and disarmament, as emphasized by the Secretary-General in his Millennium Report. We strongly believe that greater and more vigorous efforts are needed to free humankind from the menace of nuclear weapons in the twenty-first century. To reach this goal, it is high time that all nuclear-weapon States support steady and systematic measures to eliminate nuclear weapons. We particularly endorse the proposal to convene an international conference to identify ways and means to achieve this lofty goal within a specified time frame.

The ASEAN countries welcome the successful conclusion of the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which took place in New York last May. We particularly wish to underline the commitment to an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Legally binding security assurances by the five nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT would strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The final outcome document that was strenuously negotiated and adopted by consensus should be the guideline for our joint efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

In this connection, we reaffirm our conviction that an urgent need exists for the nuclear-weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfil their obligations under the NPT, in particular Article VI on nuclear disarmament and Article IV to provide technical

assistance to non-nuclear-weapon States in the application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

At the same time, the ASEAN countries are concerned at the continuing impasse regarding a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament. We consider it vital that multilateral negotiations on a phased programme of balanced deep reduction of nuclear weapons commence within the Conference on Disarmament to ensure further progress towards the total elimination of these weapons. We also support the applications for Conference on Disarmament membership of the Philippines and Thailand in the belief that expansion of membership would contribute to making the Conference on Disarmament more representative and more effective.

We in ASEAN highly appreciate the efforts of the Russian Federation and the United States to reduce their nuclear arsenals in the START process, as well as unilateral measures undertaken by other nuclear-weapon States. We particularly commend the ratification of START II and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the Russian Duma. We note with regret that the United States Senate has rejected the CTBT, and we call on the United States to reconsider its position and ratify this Treaty as soon as possible.

The ASEAN countries attach great importance to the entry into force of the CTBT and will work harder with other countries to this effect. In this regard, the ASEAN countries wish to stress the importance of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 8 July 1996 and its contribution to the common efforts to promote nuclear abolition and world peace. We particularly endorse the ruling that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be generally contrary to the rules of international law that are applicable in armed conflicts and the conclusion that it is incumbent upon all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

For a few years now, under the leading role played by Malaysia, ASEAN countries have worked very hard together as co-sponsors to adopt a resolution to follow up the historic ICJ Advisory Opinion. This year, we will again sponsor a resolution along these lines. We wish to thank many delegations on this Committee for their unwavering support and encouragement and hope that our draft resolution will enjoy wider support this year.

We wish to highlight ASEAN's concerted efforts to promote the elimination of all nuclear weapons. As you are well aware, under the initiative of your country and with your own personal dedication, our Association has made tireless efforts to reach this goal. We have been co-sponsoring a comprehensive resolution on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation since the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. It is the sincere hope of the ASEAN countries that this draft resolution will continue to garner increasing support and sponsorship at this session.

We in South-East Asia note with grave concern the proliferation of missiles in several parts of the world. This development does not bode well for security, stability and peace in various regions and the world over.

We therefore call on all States to exercise the utmost restraint in the development, testing, deployment and transfer of ballistic missiles and other means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. We deem it necessary for the world community to take appropriate steps to develop effective legal norms against the proliferation of these weapons systems and we recognize the need for a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach towards missiles as a contribution to international peace and security.

ASEAN welcomes the commitment made by the States parties to NPT at the most recent NPT Review Conference in New York, particularly the Russian Federation and the United States, to strengthening and preserving the integrity of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM). We urge both States parties to the ABM Treaty to take no measures that will encroach upon the provisions of that important Treaty.

It is the conviction of the ASEAN countries that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes an effective measure of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It is also a laudable and useful confidence-building measure. We support all efforts of Member States to set up nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned.

In South-East Asia, a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been firmly established, thanks to the common efforts of the ASEAN countries. This non-proliferation regime constitutes a milestone and contributes considerably to the enhancement of peace, security and stability in the region. The South-East Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, known as the Treaty of Bangkok, entered into force on 27 March 1997 and the Commission for the zone has begun its work.

The Protocol annexed to the Treaty, however, has yet to be signed by any nuclear-weapon State. We wish to reiterate the call made by our Minister for Foreign Affairs at the most recent meeting in Bangkok last July by urging nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol at any early date. Once again, the ASEAN countries welcome the announcement made by China at the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference in Singapore in July 1999 of its readiness to accede to the Protocol and we call on the other nuclear-weapon States to demonstrate greater flexibility in their ongoing consultations on the Protocol, particularly in the direct negotiations expected to be held in the course of next year.

The ASEAN countries wish to underline their support for the efforts and initiative of Mongolia in taking measures to implement the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status. We welcome Mongolia's announcement that it expects the five nuclear-weapon States, at this session of the General Assembly, to issue a joint statement providing security assurances to Mongolia in connection with its nuclear-weapon-free status. In this connection, we wish to reaffirm that security assurances should be extended to all nuclear-weapon-free zones.

We in ASEAN see the nuclear-weapon-free zones as building blocks of a larger regime that will help to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to enhance the stability, peace and cooperation of the countries in various regions creating such zones. In this regard, we would like to express our strong support for the resolution on the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

While ASEAN attaches importance to eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons, we are fully cognizant of the need for the international community to address the problem of other weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, the ASEAN countries stress the importance for all States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction to consider doing so at the earliest opportunity. We also welcome the progress in negotiating a verification protocol to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) by the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to the BWC.

One of the important issues on the agenda of the Committee is surely the question of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. ASEAN shares the concerns of the world community over the adverse impact of small arms on the lives of civilians and children in various armed conflicts in many parts of the world. In line with this, we highly appreciate the efforts of the world community to find ways and means to address this issue, including the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. ASEAN countries will make every effort to ensure a successful conclusion of the Conference.

At the same time, joint efforts to address the issue should take into account the right of all States to take measures in self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, as well as the specific circumstances of different regions of the world.

The ASEAN countries attach tremendous importance to the confidence-building efforts of the countries in the region. Through the steady progress of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), various initiatives and concrete measures have been undertaken to enhance regional security, which also help to advance global disarmament objectives. The recent admission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to ARF in July marked an important step forward in the Forum's development. We welcome the contributions of countries participating in the Forum for the enhancement of mutual understanding and cooperation in the region.

We also wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for its significant contributions to promoting regional and subregional dialogue and mutual understanding among member States on security and disarmament matters.

We firmly believe that the frequent meetings and workshops organized by the Centre are highly useful and beneficial to the countries of the region. We support the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report on the Centre, as they appear in document A/55/181.

As regards the relocation of the Centre, ASEAN countries are of the view that further consultations are needed to address this issue properly so that the Centre will operate in a more effective and efficient manner, to the satisfaction of all countries concerned. We are also of the view that, until a satisfactory solution can be found to this issue, the Centre should continue to operate under the present arrangement. We also believe that, in addressing the issue of relocating the Centre, all possibilities should be explored so that such a relocation will not affect its effective functioning.

At the dawn of a new millennium, it is the wish of the ASEAN countries that all efforts be exerted to make use of the opportunity to work for a more peaceful and better world.

Mr. Araujo Castro (Brazil): Having worked for a number of years as a First Committee representative and having had the privilege of chairing the Disarmament Commission, it is a pleasure for me to return to this conference room and to participate once again in the annual deliberations of the General Assembly on disarmament and related matters.

I wish to express our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. Please accept our best wishes and the assurance that you will have the full cooperation of the Brazilian delegation. You have inherited a First Committee that was conducted last year with ability and professionalism by a fellow Latin American representative, Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile.

I wish also to express our appreciation for the work that is being carried out by the Department for Disarmament Affairs under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala and to thank him for the thoughtful statement he made this morning to the Committee.

This general debate should permit a collective reflection on why political commitments and words do not always translate into deeds and on how the international community can work to build on progress achieved in different areas, in particular in the field of nuclear disarmament. The results of the Sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) were of special significance to all of us. I would stress the relevance of steps such as the unequivocal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and the adoption of a robust programme of action by the Treaty parties.

This unequivocal commitment is now a milestone on the path by which the international community is expected to carry on its efforts to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons. As Brazilian Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia told the General Assembly, the results of the Conference

> "will be a litmus test for future advances in the nuclear disarmament field". *(A/55/PV.10)*

The spirit of cooperation and sense of responsibility that prevailed on that occasion should be sustained.

Having participated for the first time in a Review Conference as a party to the NPT, Brazil is proud to have contributed, as a member of the New Agenda Coalition, to its positive outcome. The wide support then gathered by the working document presented by the Coalition was a confirmation of our common interest in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that the New Agenda draft resolution to be put to this Committee can enjoy the same level of support. I will not dwell on the current context of nuclear disarmament and on the pressing challenges ahead of us, since the Brazilian thoughts on these matters are reflected in the ministerial communiqué (A/C.1/55/3) issued by the New Agenda Coalition countries on 13 September. We welcome the statement by Ambassador Salander of Sweden on behalf of the seven delegations of the New Agenda Coalition.

Allow me to add that during its presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, in July and August of this year, Brazil tried to broker an agreement on the programme of work of that body. Despite the talent and the dedication of Ambassador Celso Amorim, a final consensus eluded us, but we were satisfied by the level of support achieved by the Brazilian proposal and by the fact that, as reflected in the Conference on Disarmament report to the General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament membership recognized the support of the Conference for the text as a basis for further, intensified consultations.

The experience of the Conference on Disarmament underscores the urgency of reinforcing the multilateral machinery of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is not comforting to see that this machinery runs the risk of rusting — in the words of the Secretary-General in his opening statement to the NPT Review Conference — due to an "apparent lack of political will to use it". A paralysed Conference on Disarmament is to no one's benefit.

In the same sense, Brazil attaches great importance to the United Nations Disarmament Commission as a universal forum which can and should be used for discussing new ideas and proposals in the field of disarmament. I personally had the opportunity of working closely with the Commission in the early 1990s, chairing one of its working groups in 1991 and acting as Vice-Chairman in 1992 and as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for its 1993 session.

Bearing in mind current multilateral work in the field of disarmament, it is interesting to recall that during the Commission's 1993 session we were able to conduct quite meaningful deliberations on three subjects: nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons; regional approaches to disarmament; and the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, which included discussion of questions related to the transfer of high technology with military applications.

As noted in the non-paper recently circulated in Geneva by the Brazilian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, we should bear in mind that disarmament mechanisms are

> "influenced by and responsive to developments in the international strategic scene which affect the security interests of individual States".

One of the most visible issues that could affect the international strategic scene was removed, for the short-term, from the list of possible worrisome developments. As regards the future of missile defences, we are confident that both parties to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty will refrain from the implementation of any measure that would undermine the Treaty's purpose or its integrity and validity. Brazil also hopes that the United States' decision to put off initial work on a national missile defence system can promote understanding and progress in multilateral disarmament forums, especially in the Conference on Disarmament.

Limiting the geographical space where nuclear weapons are deployed is, for Brazil, a powerful message that non-nuclear-weapon States can deliver regarding their disagreement with the retention of this armament. We are committed to the consolidation of existing, and the creation of new, nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Together with other countries, as announced this morning by Ambassador Pearson of New Zealand, Brazil intends to present once again to this Committee a draft resolution on freeing the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas of nuclear weapons. We are convinced that freeing the southern hemisphere from nuclear weapons is a common initiative of interest to all members of nuclear-weapon-free zones as well as to other countries.

Brazil commends the work done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), under the leadership of its Director-General, Ambassador José Maurício Bustani. The Brazilian Government is sparing no effort to fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, including by presenting its annual declaration of activities in the chemical industry and by successfully hosting, to date, five inspections in our chemical industries and the first simulation of a challenge inspection in a private industry.

As a reaffirmation of our support for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of our commitment to the elimination of all chemical weapons, our President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, will visit the OPCW headquarters in The Hague next week, during his official visit to the Netherlands.

In the field of conventional weapons as well, the disarmament community has been active. Brazil had the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the banning of anti-personnel landmines on the occasion of the second meeting of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention, which was held in Geneva some weeks ago. We have joined the international mine-clearance efforts, sending personnel to perform such activities in the context of United Nations missions in Angola and providing assistance and experts to mine-clearance operations in South and Central America.

Brazil is actively participating in the preparatory process for the 2001 conference on the illicit trade in small arms. As we have been pointing out, the destabilizing accumulation of small arms is, from a South American perspective, mainly related to organized crime and urban violence. Brazil hopes that the scheduled informal consultations on this issue will permit us to define the venue and date of the conference, as well as provide a good basis for understanding on other outstanding matters related to the event. Among these matters is the participation of non-governmental organizations, which we support.

As foreseen, we will have before us the report of the Group of Governmental Experts mandated by this Committee to review the functioning of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Brazil has been providing detailed information to the Register since its inception, and invites other countries to do the same. We endorse the observations and conclusions of the report, and underline the importance of achieving universality for the Register, so that it can fulfil its envisaged role as a credible and useful global confidence-building measure.

Also in the field of conventional arms, it is our opinion that the First Committee should pay attention to the worrisome trend of qualitative armament and the increased sophistication of conventional arsenals, especially among the major military Powers. We believe this tendency contradicts the disarmament goals of the international community and ignores the calls that this Committee and the General Assembly have made repeatedly for a decrease in military expenditures.

Brazil is proud to belong to a region that is free of international conflicts. Latin America and the Caribbean countries traditionally present low levels of military expenditure. Defence procurement in our region aims basically at the replacement of obsolete material.

The commitment of our region to peace and disarmament is reflected in a number of regional and subregional instruments that attest to our common purpose of integration and development. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which created the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in an inhabited area of the world, and the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic are meaningful examples of this determination.

In the South Cone, even prior to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Argentina, Brazil and Chile renounced, by the 1991 Mendoza Declaration, the use, production, acquisition, stockpiling and transfer of chemical and biological weapons. We were subsequently joined by Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Ecuador. Later, the Political Declaration of Ushuaia, in 1998, established the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries and Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace, free of weapons of mass destruction.

All those progressive steps dating back to the 1960s were complemented and reinforced by the decision to establish a South American Zone of Peace, announced in Brasilia on 1 September 2000, by the Presidents of all the countries of South America. In the Brasilia Communiqué, which was then adopted and whose text has been distributed in document A/55/375, our Presidents also encouraged the deepening of the dialogue on security in South America, taking into account the human, economic and social aspects of the issue.

In matters relating to international security, we reject the logic of power through arms, and we firmly believe in the value of cooperation among nations based on dialogue and understanding and on respect for the United Nations Charter and other rules of international law.

We are of the view that all weapons of mass destruction should be banned as a matter of priority. No other disarmament goal is more imperative. Chemical and biological weapons are being dealt with. Nuclear weapons remain to be eliminated. The retention of nuclear weapons is illegitimate and a constant threat to humanity.

In the Millennium Summit Declaration we resolved, at the highest levels of our Governments,

> "To strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons" (*A/RES/55/2 para.9*)

It is now time to act. By translating this commitment into practice we will be heeding the appeals of all our peoples for a safer world.

Election of the Vice-Chairmen

The Chairman: At its second meeting, held on 14 September, the First Committee elected Ms. Petra Schneebauer of Austria and Mr. Alberto Guani of

Uruguay as Vice-Chairmen. It decided to postpone the election of other officers to a later date.

Today I am pleased to inform the Committee that, as a result of intensive consultations, the Group of African States has nominated Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua of Algeria as a candidate for the remaining vacant post of Vice-Chairman. In the absence of other nominations, and recalling rule 113 of the rules of procedure and the established practice, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Mesdoua elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: May I express to the Vice-Chairman my warmest congratulations on the distinction that has been conferred upon him and assure him of my utmost support and cooperation in the joint discharge of the responsibilities incumbent upon us.

Election of other officers

The Chairman: So far we have received no nomination from the Group of Eastern European States. I request the regional group to come forward with the nomination of the candidate for the remaining post of Rapporteur, so that we may complete the composition of the Bureau as soon as possible.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I remind the Committee that, in accordance with the Committee's decision, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items will be closed today at 6 p.m. I urge the interested delegations to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible. For conference services, 30 copies of the prepared statements should be provided to the Secretariat. For general distribution, 250 copies will be required.

Moreover, it should be noted that, as agreed at the organizational meeting, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions has been set at 6 p.m. on Friday, 13 October. This deadline will be strictly implemented, as last year. In this context, I urge members to submit draft resolutions as early as possible, especially "traditional" draft resolutions and the draft resolutions which might entail financial implications.

I also have an important announcement concerning the informal meetings and other activities in connection with the forthcoming United Nations conference on small arms. As a result of consultations with the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, on Friday, 6 October, Friday, 13 October and Monday, 16 October the First Committee will meet from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., and the informal consultations on small arms, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Santos of Mozambique, will follow thereafter from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. If there should be a need for an additional one or two meetings, we shall organize them in consultations with Ambassador Santos at a later stage.

I would like to reiterate the two requests I made at the organizational meeting, namely, that those present switch off cellular phones during proceedings of the Committee and that representatives observe punctuality so that we may start our meetings promptly and make the optimum use of available conference services.

Expression of condolences to Dominica and Canada

The Chairman: I should like to express on behalf of the members of the Committee, as well as on my own behalf, our profound condolences to the delegation of Dominica on the sudden passing away of its Prime Minister, Mr. Roosevelt Douglas, as well as to the delegation of Canada on the demise of its former Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Trudeau.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/55/PV.4

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

First Committee

4th meeting

Tuesday, 3 October 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Election of the Rapporteur

The Chairman: In accordance with the programme of work and agreed timetable, the Committee will first elect its Rapporteur and then continue with its general debate.

As you will recall, at its second and third meetings held on 14 September and 2 October, the Committee elected Ms. Petra Schneebauer of Austria, Mr. Alberto Guani of Uruguay and Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua of Algeria as Vice-Chairmen. It was also decided to postpone the election of the Rapporteur to a later date. Today, I am pleased to inform you that, as a result of consultations within the Group of Eastern European States, that Group has nominated Mr. Rastislav Gabriel of the Slovak Republic as a candidate to the post of the Rapporteur of the First Committee.

As there are no other nominations, and recalling rule 113 of the rules of procedure and established practice, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Rastislav Gabriel elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Rastislav Gabriel upon his election as Rapporteur of the First Committee, and I invite him to take the seat reserved for him at the podium.

I am pleased to note that, by completing the election of its Bureau members, the Committee has reaffirmed the important pattern of rotation for the posts of the chairmanship and the rapporteurship among the various regional groups established last year.

The Committee has now concluded its consideration of the election of its officers.

General debate (*continued*)

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Mr. Chairman, the Bangladesh delegation congratulates you on your election as the Chairman of this Committee. Our special greetings and felicitations are directed to you as a neighbouring country. We assure you of our fullest cooperation. We are confident that under your skilful leadership our deliberations will be fruitful.

We also express our thanks and appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive presentation covering various issues before this Committee.

Here I would like to pay tribute to the undeniably important role played by civil society, including the non-governmental organizations, in the field of disarmament. Through their constructive contribution, members of civil society have made a valuable contribution in various initiatives on nuclear and conventional disarmament, with remarkable success in

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the areas of landmines and small arms. Civil society should receive our full support in its endeavour to strengthen the hand of the United Nations in the promotion of general and complete disarmament.

As we participate in this general debate, let me reiterate Bangladesh's commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament, which is unequivocal. This commitment flows from our constitutional obligation. Our adherence to major disarmament treaties stems from it. To this end, we have supported and shall continue to support all efforts leading towards total and complete disarmament including the effective elimination of all nuclear weapons. As an active member of the Conference on Disarmament, Bangladesh remains committed to contributing to discussions, deliberations, debates and substantive negotiations on a broad range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

As the Secretary-General has observed in his report on the work of the Organization, disarmament is a critical element of the United Nations strategy for peace and security. We are disturbed to note from the report that the latest figures indicate that global military expenditures increased in 1999 for the first time in the post-cold-war period. Although there has been some progress in the reduction of nuclear weapons, there remains a deep concern within the international community about the continuing risk posed by such weapons.

We are dismayed that the Conference on Disarmament could not engage in substantive work at its recently concluded session, as it failed to reach a consensus on the programme of work. The cap on nuclear proliferation remains unshielded and there are suggestions that the number of threshold States could potentially be on the rise. The controversy over vertical proliferation has also been accentuated by subcritical tests.

There is nevertheless a perceptible and indeed expanding international consensus that favours the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The Russian Federation's ratification of the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and the adoption by consensus of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are two recent encouraging developments in this regard. The Hague Appeal for Peace's call for the delegitimization of war reflects the conscience of humankind. The agreement to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is also a step forward, as is the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is now of the utmost importance that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), together with its objectives agreed to at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT, become universally accepted. We urge all nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-capable States in all regions to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The easy availability of small arms through their illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation is a matter of serious concern. My delegation fully shares the regional and international concern that the easy availability of small arms and light weapons escalates conflicts, undermines political stability and has a devastating impact on peace and security. It is the abundant and ready supply of easy-to-use tools of conflict that is responsible for the fact that an estimated 90 per cent of the deaths and injuries in armed conflicts are among civilians, of whom, shockingly, 80 per cent are women and children. The problem has been exacerbated by the absence of global norms or standards to reduce such accumulation or transfer. We expect that the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next year, will produce effective measures to ensure that such arms cease to jeopardize human security.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was adopted by an overwhelmingly positive vote at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. A total of 158 countries voted in favour of the resolution, including the five nuclear-weapon States. Bangladesh signed the CTBT on 24 October 1996 and ratified it in March this year. We urge all those countries that have not signed the CTBT to sign it without further delay. As a South Asian nation, Bangladesh hopes that India and Pakistan will soon join the CTBT, in keeping with announcements made by their heads of Government, and thereby free the region of nuclear rivalry.

In keeping with the long-standing position of the Non-Aligned Movement, Bangladesh seeks a zero-

yield, universal and effectively verifiable test-ban treaty with a view to realizing the principles and objectives set for nuclear non-proliferation. As a least developed country, Bangladesh's major concern has been the financial obligations that would devolve to the States parties on account of the implementation of the CTBT, comprising the expenses of the CTBT Preparatory Commission, the CTBT Organization and the verification regime, including the International Monitoring System of the CTBT and the Technical Secretariat. As the coordinator of the least developed countries, Bangladesh has already voiced its concern in the matter in the Conference on Disarmament and in other relevant forums.

As a party to the Biological Weapons Convention, Bangladesh is fully aware of its responsibilities and takes its obligation seriously. By not having developed, acquired or stockpiled biological weapons, Bangladesh is in full compliance with the provisions of the Convention. The full adherence to the Convention of all States would be the ultimate guarantee to ensure the effective elimination of biological weapons. There is therefore a clear need to chart a credible compliance regime.

As for the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it and, although we have no chemical weapons programme or facilities, we ratified it in April 1997. But the ratification of the Convention will have little meaning unless the major chemical-weapons countries join it. We emphasize the necessity of universal adherence to the Convention and call upon all States that have not done so to become States parties to the Convention without delay.

In today's world, regional disarmament presents newer challenges. The continued arms race, contingent upon unresolved problems, is a formidable threat to security and is draining the considerable resources of many countries at the cost of their not being invested in economic development. It is our belief that, while regional confidence-building measures can go a long way, true regional disarmament will largely depend on understanding at the global level and courageous gestures from major Powers.

It is in this connection that we attach high importance to the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Development. My delegation has always urged that these Centres, including the one for Asia and the Pacific, be given sufficient support and resources in order for them to be more active in promoting dialogue on disarmament on the regional and subregional planes.

As regards the Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific, Bangladesh's views are well known. We remain very disappointed to find that, despite repeated decisions of the General Assembly, the Centre is not operating from Kathmandu, its headquarters, and is being run from here in New York. There is no reason for the Centre to be run from New York. Here, we would like to draw attention to the statement of the Foreign Minister of Nepal at the general debate of the plenary last month, wherein he categorically stated that Nepal was fully prepared to meet its obligation to house the Centre in Kathmandu. We are disappointed to see that the Secretary-General's report on the Centre does not provide any positive indication about moving the Centre to Kathmandu. The argument of financial constraint does not seem plausible. The report is silent about the funds required. We would like to know from the Secretariat about the budgetary requirements for the Centre to operate from Kathmandu, so that the matter may be appropriately addressed.

In closing, may I say that disarmament should not be seen as an end in itself. The noble motivation for disarmament — to save humanity from the scourge of war and destruction — should also inspire us to elevate the majority of human beings from the abyss of poverty and deprivation. The savings from a small cut in the military expenditures of major Powers could contribute substantially to the development of the developing countries. Such voluntary cuts in expenditures on arms can increase the dividends on investments in the betterment of the underprivileged of the world. We must pursue this objective with determination and sincerity.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation wishes to express its congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over our deliberations. We are confident that under your guidance, substantive progress will be made in dealing with the important issues on our agenda. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. Let me avail myself of this opportunity to commend the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for his lucid statement on various disarmament and security issues.

It is a truism that at the dawn of the new millennium the threat posed by nuclear weapons remains a stark reality. Despite reductions, some 35,000 nuclear weapons still remain in the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States, many on alert status. We have to acknowledge the reality that these weapons constitute the principal danger to security and humanity's survival. Paradoxically, however, the hopes engendered by the international community for nuclear peace continue to be elusive.

After the Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF), some progress has been made in eliminating nuclear arsenals, under the provisions of START I. The ratification of START II by the Russian Federation last April has opened the way for deeper strategic arms reduction. There is a continuing decline in the number of deployed nuclear weapons. Some nuclear-weapon States have declared that they are no longer producing fissile materials and have taken steps to reduce the threats posed by their nuclear weapons.

But, regrettably, nuclear weapons have made a disturbing comeback. Indeed, their further elimination has come to a virtual standstill. Rather than further deep reductions, some of the nuclear-weapon States are solidifying their stockpiles and consolidating their weapons infrastructure. Modern designs are not only being maintained, but also upgraded to more sophisticated weaponry. The focus continues to be on new rationalizations for the continued possession of nuclear weapons, rather than on abolishing them. Consequently, the nuclear-weapon States have failed to comply with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and have ignored their commitments to systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons globally, in accordance with the decisions taken by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Hence, the NPT Review Conference held last May was convened in a disquieting atmosphere and exacerbated by a stalemate in the START process; by the uncertainties surrounding the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); by doubts concerning the conclusion of a treaty to ban the use of fissile materials for weapons purposes; and by plans for a national missile defence system which threatened to undo existing arms control agreements, unleash a new nuclear arms race and undermine the NPT.

Although there have been lingering doubts about its outcome, the Review Conference did take decisions of a far-reaching nature. The highlight was, no doubt, the adoption of practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. For Indonesia, these practical steps provide criteria for determining progress in fulfilling nuclear-disarmament obligations. In this context, new approaches to nuclear and related issues were agreed on. These new approaches included most notably the implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III as soon as possible; diminishing the future role of such strategic weapons in security arsenals, so as to minimize the risk of their use; confidence-building measures to reduce nuclear dangers; and recognition of the contribution to the abolition of nuclear weapons that was made by the 1996 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion. Thus the progress made, together with agreements on procedural aspects for the next Review Conference, have tended to provide direction for the previously moribund efforts of the past several years and have given rise to a sense of optimism regarding the future viability of the Treaty.

However, the unequivocal commitment to the abolition of nuclear arsenals was not accompanied by a time-frame, and this obligation was again cast in terms of a remote, indefinite future. Consequently, it skirted the critical issues of the extent and pace of negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. A genuine commitment should prepare the ground for more drastic cuts and thereby bolster the efforts for the total elimination of these weapons. Furthermore, a diminishing role for nuclear weapons cannot be realistically contemplated as long as strategic doctrines remain unchanged and nuclear weapons continue to underpin the security of military alliances. The reaffirmation of the first-use of nuclear weapons, the security role of these weapons and even the utility of such weapons as a deterrent to non-nuclear attacks is diametrically opposed to the position taken by the Non-aligned Countries. And, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report to the Millennium Assembly:

> "The objective of nuclear non-proliferation is not helped by the fact that the nuclear-weapon States continue to insist that those weapons in their hands enhance security, while in the hands of others they are a threat to world peace."

Tactical nuclear arsenals, which constitute more than half of the global stockpile of nuclear warheads, are not covered by any agreement. Although conceived in the context of the cold war, they continue to be maintained on high-alert status, which has lost its rationale. Continued reliance on nuclear armaments for security has rendered these weapons redundant. They have diminished military value and have in fact become obsolete. Still, genuine nuclear disarmament should begin with the elimination of these destabilizing weapons, whose very existence is fraught with the danger of accidental or unauthorized use.

The imperatives of the post-cold-war period also call for transparency with regard to the number of weapons and nuclear materials. Declaring the size of stockpiles, together with plutonium and highly enriched uranium, will enhance the overall transparency of nuclear-weapons programmes, and this will constitute a valuable confidence-building measure. It will also reinforce other initiatives, such as visits to nuclear weapons facilities, lead to a reassessment of nuclear doctrines and a reappraisal of force postures, removing suspicions and enhancing cooperation.

Unilateral reductions will open new frontiers for arms limitation and reinforce bilateral agreements. A fissile-material cut-off treaty would strengthen the legitimacy of the NPT and complement strategic arms reduction treaties by facilitating stockpile reductions and preventing the manufacture of new fissile materials. These measures should be reinforced by the irreversibility of the nuclear-disarmament process, preserving so-called strategic stability, avoiding the introduction of destabilizing weapons and identifying the key elements for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, including verification requirements.

Above all, proposals emanating from countries or groups of countries, including the Group of 21, call for open-ended deliberations on past, existing and future proposals on nuclear and related issues under multilateral auspices. In the new millennium, the importance of the Conference on Disarmament will increase, solidifying its rightful place as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament issues.

In order to carry forward the agreements reached and advance the disarmament agenda, the convening of the fourth United Nations special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) has become imperative. The decision by the United Nations General Assembly to convene SSOD IV, which has been impeded in the past, has begun to show to some forward movement. From its vantage position as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission's Working Group on SSOD IV during the period from 1997 to 1999, Indonesia has noted the progress made with regard to the objectives and agenda — which have been the impediments — and to achieving a near consensus on those issues. The objectives would comprise a review and assessment of the international situation in the post-cold war era, and efforts to draw lessons from past endeavours, identify ways and means of meeting new challenges and formulate an agreed plan of action for the future that would strengthen multilateralism in disarmament. With regard to the agenda, all relevant issues in disarmament and security, including nuclear weapons and conventional armaments, should be discussed in all their aspects at the special session.

While taking into account various attempts to limit armaments in the post-cold war period, SSOD IV will streamline those endeavours, assess the implementation or non-implementation of the decisions, resolutions and provisions of treaties and provide us with an opportunity to end the incessant arms race and to achieve disarmament. In these endeavours, the reports of the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, as well as a review of relevant General Assembly resolutions and the status of negotiations in bilateral and multilateral forums, will provide significant inputs.

Thus, the task facing SSOD IV will be to make progress on issues that have global implications by setting out a broad and comprehensive framework for priorities in arms limitation on the basis of achieving security for all nations through disarmament. This would entail the identification of disarmament measures at the bilateral, subregional, regional and, most importantly, at the global level in tandem with each other. It is on this foundation that future efforts in the field of arms limitation should be pursued so as to serve the legitimate interests and concerns of all States in the new millennium.

Let me add parenthetically that the Assembly, in a major departure from the Disarmament Commission's practice of considering each issue only for a three-year period, mandated the Commission to renew its consideration of this question for an unprecedented fourth consecutive year. This reflects the importance that an overwhelming majority of States attaches to the

early convening of the session as both timely and appropriate. My delegation therefore remains hopeful that it can be achieved. We see SSOD IV with the participation of all Member States as being in the interest of all countries in an effort to limit and eliminate armaments through a balanced agenda that would ensure a substantive outcome. This calls for a flexible and constructive approach to ensure the success of our endeavours. Failure, on the other hand, would have negative consequences for the cause of disarmament and might run the risk of delaying action to an uncertain future. Our collective experience in limiting armaments provides ample evidence that failure to seize an opportunity can result in regrettable delays.

One of the major problems of peace and security during the past decade has been the accumulation and misuse of small arms. Although they do not, by themselves, cause the conflicts in which they are used, their excessive and uncontrolled availability has fostered violence and destabilized States and societies already fraught with political, social and ethnic upheaval. It is feared that the full impact of this phenomenon will be felt even more in the years to come.

Against this backdrop, the forthcoming international conference on small arms trafficking will be called upon to deal with a multiplicity of interrelated issues. The complexities attendant upon the control of small arms go beyond the traditional instruments of arms control and disarmament and call for a comprehensive approach. The dynamics of disarmament and those of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building have to be brought together. Preventive measures, such as restraining the circulation of existing weapons, and reactive measure, such as the collection and destruction of weapons, have to be pursued simultaneously. Problems of security, demobilization, reintegration of combatants and development must be tackled in an integrated and phased manner. The influx of new arms must be prevented through effective border controls to forestall the emergence of new conflicts, as illicit trafficking does not respect national or regional borders.

In view of the comprehensive nature of the problem, a global framework emphasizing new global norms and responsibilities can integrate different perspectives, respond to specific subregional programmes and ensure coherence and consistency in international efforts. Only a global effort can avoid the shift of focus and dilution of effort that characterize many of the efforts until now; it can generate and distribute resources more effectively, develop programmes which do not exist nationally and provide linkages among them.

What is needed is a forward-looking agenda and a programme of action that would put in place global norms to be implemented by all States parties. Given the fact that these weapons are produced, exported and acquired for legitimate national security purposes, it is not appropriate to seek a ban on all types of weapons. Rather, the programme should consist of principles whose implementation will lead to the reduction and prevention of the indiscriminate and unlawful use of these weapons that have caused so much suffering for so many for so long. These principles should define the actions and measures to be taken by the Member States concerned.

In this regard, the Government of Indonesia and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, hosted the Jakarta Regional Seminar on Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons last May. It focused attention on the magnitude and scope of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, measures to combat such illicit trafficking and the role of the United Nations in collecting, collating, sharing and disseminating information.

In dealing with this issue, intra- and interregional cooperation, particularly information sharing and coordination, the establishment of an interlocking web of security cooperation, as well as legal controls and regulatory structures, were deemed essential. Concurrently, it would also be necessary for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to build upon existing regional and subregional mechanisms in order to effectively address the illicit trade in small arms and enhance cooperation. Furthermore, although South Asia is less affected by this problem, in this era of globalization no country or subregion can be immune to its profoundly negative consequences.

Finally, the initiation of dialogue and the convening of meetings and conferences have become important modalities to promote regional and subregional cooperation on questions relating to the reduction and elimination of armaments. In this regard,

my delegation commends the programmes undertaken by the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Kathmandu for over a decade. They have facilitated the exploration of new vistas, delineated areas for possible negotiations and agreements and thereby strengthened the prospects for disarmament. For these reasons, the activities of the Centre should be continued.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I wish sincerely to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to your respective posts. We are grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for the statement he made yesterday; it constituted a valuable review of the situation with respect to prohibited weaponry and other weapons that affect both regional and international peace, security and stability.

Over the past few years, nuclear arsenals have been reduced owing to the end of the cold war, to unilateral and bilateral efforts by nuclear-weapon States, and to the positive results of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which the parties unanimously adopted a number of practical steps that bolstered the role of the Disarmament Commission in the gradual elimination of such weapons.

But despite such positive results, it was impossible for the Conference on Disarmament at its recent Geneva session to reach agreement on the process of banning nuclear weapons. This is not consonant with the recommendations and resolutions adopted at the Review Conference or with the Millennium Declaration. Members of the international community, especially nuclear-weapon States, must redouble their efforts, with due transparency, to reduce their arsenals bilaterally and multilaterally and take up the ongoing challenges facing the non-proliferation regime.

Security is the legitimate right of all States. That concept should not be confined only to prohibited weapons; it should apply also to the strengthening of mechanisms of international cooperation in the fields of peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy, which requires a commitment by the international community to norms that can help achieve the desired progress. It is our view also that regional and international security arrangements relating to transparency in weapons acquisitions should be a high priority; they can strengthen confidence, peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourliness.

My country has acceded to the NPT, to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction with a view to strengthening their universality so that the establishment of zones free of weapons of mass destruction can lead to disarmament. Once more, we urge that the Middle East, including the Arab Gulf region, should become a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of other weapons of mass destruction. We urge the international community to call upon the Israeli Government to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear installations under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards in accordance with the relevant internationally binding resolutions and with the provisions adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

We are optimistic about the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, to be held in 2001. That conference will be of paramount importance in promoting regional and international cooperation and in addressing all aspects of this grave phenomenon taking into account the special characteristics and conditions applying in each region.

Some regions, especially in Africa and in Asia, continue to be plagued by conflict and occupation. This in turn affects both regional and international peace and security, as well as international relations. Peace and stability in the Arab Gulf region cannot come about so long as certain countries of the region continue to acquire prohibited and non-conventional weapons. This has caused a clear military and strategic imbalance in that area. We therefore reaffirm that the achievement of regional peace and security requires the promotion of constructive bilateral and multilateral dialogue among the States of the region on the basis of good-neighbourliness, confidence-building measures, and respect for international law, for the territorial integrity and political independence of States, for non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and for the principle that force should not be used in the settlement of conflicts but that they should be settled

peacefully on the basis of the provisions of the United Nations Charter and of international law.

In conclusion we look forward to a new era in international relations characterized by the non-proliferation of prohibited weapons and weapons of mass destruction, so that mankind may live in peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for the fifty-fifth session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and the other members of the Bureau lead the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

In our statement to the Committee last year, we commented on the deepening crisis in international relations, non-proliferation and disarmament and arms control, and on the inability of multilateral forums substantively to address some of the most central issues of our day. In that context, we reiterate our concern over the negative implications, in particular for nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of the testing, development and possible deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems, and retain our firm belief that international peace and security require the involvement of the entire international community. Multilateral engagement is essential. While some opportunities to advance our efforts have been squandered, some events this year have lifted our lagging spirits and faith and have renewed our determination on these issues.

The first was the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). While the general prognosis had been gloomy, the outcome was a hard-fought compromise that surpassed many expectations. The most significant achievement was the new unequivocal political undertaking given by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to implement a programme of action containing practical steps that are mutually reinforcing and need to be carried out in a multi-stranded manner. Progress on the implementation of these commitments by the nuclear-weapon States will be the test over the next five years.

Another was the recent, successful second meeting of the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The mine-ban Convention continues to set new standards in disarmament. In less than three years 107 States have ratified or acceded to the Convention — a record-breaking achievement. Stockpiles of anti-personnel mines are swiftly being eradicated and mine-victim casualties are falling, while funding for mine action programmes is increasing. Moreover, the international norm established by the Convention is having a global impact, as trade has almost disappeared and production has declined dramatically.

Furthermore, the inclusive nature of the partnership between Governments and civil society in the creation of the Convention has been maintained and reinforced through the Standing Committee of Experts and the Landmine Monitor. An enormous amount of implementation work has been done effectively through the mechanism of the Standing Committee of Experts with minimum cost implications while the comprehensive annual Monitor Report has proved to be an effective compliance initiative. It is significant that heads of State and Government, during the recently concluded United Nations Millennium Summit, called on all States to consider acceding to the Treaty.

The continuing work by the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction on a protocol to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention is encouraging and nearing completion. South Africa is fully committed to these negotiations achieving the objectives we set at the Special Conference in 1994. We remain convinced that the agreed time-frame for the completion of the protocol is realistic and can be met.

With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention, my delegation wishes to note that the past year has continued to see a further consolidation of the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The submission by the United States of its industrial declarations in May of this year has significantly strengthened, as well as brought a sense of balance to, the industrial verification regime. The destruction of chemical weapons and related stockpiles has also continued to gather momentum, with some possessor States well ahead of the schedules laid down by the Convention. One possessor State,

however, continues to face significant difficulties with respect to its destruction programme. While it remains the responsibility of each possessor State to ensure the destruction of its stockpile, it is in the interest of all States that these terrible weapons be destroyed. South Africa remains convinced that every effort should be made by all possessor States to ensure the complete and timely destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles. The destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles is a costly and dangerous undertaking, and the efforts of the possessor States, and in particular the Russian Federation, to achieve the goals laid down by the Convention in this regard should be supported to the fullest extent possible.

South Africa remains optimistic that the able leadership of Ambassador Dos Santos of Mozambique, as the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, will result in the international community recognizing its obligation to deal with the issue of small arms and light weapons in a multifaceted manner that includes security, humanitarian and developmental issues. South Africa believes that the success of this Conference will be judged by follow-up actions undertaken in the context of the decisions of the Conference rather than the decisions themselves. The multitude of intensified national and regional initiatives to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons is evidence of the growing political will to effectively and comprehensively address this issue. In this regard, South Africa welcomes the declaration by all heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit that they will take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, especially by making arms transfers more transparent and by supporting regional disarmament measures.

South Africa is increasingly concerned about the proliferation and excessive accumulation of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, in Africa. This proliferation and excessive accumulation are having a debilitating impact on Africa and on the various subregions of the continent. Not only are these weapons being used in internal and intra-State conflicts in Africa, but they are also the weapons of choice of the perpetrators of violent crimes, drug smugglers and poachers long after the conflicts have been resolved. Not only is Africa severely affected by the death, mutilation, destruction and crime caused by small arms, but the proliferation and illicit trafficking of these weapons have a direct and negative impact on the African renaissance. One of the cornerstones of the African renaissance in striving for socio-economic development, democratization and good governance in Africa is stability and security on the continent. This security and stability cannot be accomplished without combating the proliferation of conventional arms, as well as small arms and light weapons and their illicit trafficking, and without dealing with the issue comprehensively on both the demand and the supply side.

An issue that is of particular importance in combating the illicit trade in these weapons is the promotion of the removal of arms from society and the destruction of surplus arms. South Africa has adopted policies that give preference to the destruction of redundant and obsolete small arms, rather than selling them, as an important part of the Government's comprehensive strategy to prevent, combat and eradicate the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms.

As a practical manifestation of that policy, South Africa, with the generous assistance and cooperation of the Government of Norway, was recently able to initiate the process of destroying over a quarter of a million redundant small arms from its military stockpile.

South Africa attaches importance to the role of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as an instrument of international humanitarian law. South Africa believes that a renewed focus should be placed on that Convention as a viable instrument that could proactively address various conventional weapons deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. South Africa views it as important that the Convention's review conference scheduled for 2001 address those issues that would improve the effective implementation of the Convention, rather than reopen existing protocols. In that regard, consideration should be given to addressing issues pertaining to extending the scope of the application of the Convention to be in conformity with that of amended Protocol II as well as an effective verification mechanism, which the Convention lacks. In addition, a process should be launched to urgently consider and develop an additional protocol to deal with explosive remnants of war.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to undertake substantive work again this year, and the fact that most First Committee resolutions do not enjoy the support of all Member States and that the work of the Disarmament Commission is often ignored, are reasons for concern. Part of the problem is that the disarmament mechanisms that were created 22 years ago do not reflect today's realities. Our institutions and mechanisms, their membership, financial implications and methods of work are in need of serious re-evaluation and overhaul.

South Africa will again, along with its partners and cosponsors of the New Agenda, share in the submission of a draft resolution to the First Committee. That draft resolution provides a bridge upon which the overwhelming majority of States should be able join together towards a world free of nuclear weapons. South Africa will also, along with its cosponsors, share in the submission of a draft resolution on illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, in the hope that it will be adopted without a vote, as it was last year. Furthermore, in our capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, we will participate in the submission of draft resolutions that are of specific concern to the Movement. South Africa remains committed to working in the First Committee and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums so as to achieve the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, and the limitation of the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that, with your experience and diplomatic skills, you will guide this session to success. The Chinese delegation would like to assure you that it will fully cooperate with you and other members of the Bureau, and that we will make our contribution to the success of the Committee. I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my appreciation for the excellent work done by the Chairman of the last session, Ambassador González.

This session of the First Committee is being held at the turn of the century and at the dawn of a new millennium. International arms control and the disarmament process have come to a crucial crossroads. The international situation is undergoing profound changes. Despite twists and turns, multipolarization is gaining momentum, and economic globalization is bringing about closer economic and trade ties between States. Meanwhile, negative factors affecting global and regional peace and stability still exist and are even growing; the world is far from being tranquil. A certain country, emboldened by its military, scientific and technological superiority, tends to pursue unilateralism in international affairs and attempts to seek absolute security. This hampers the sound, sustained development of the international disarmament process.

History has proved that security is both relative and mutual. One country cannot achieve true security unless that security is based on the common security of all countries. Nowadays, with the existence of frequent communications and closer ties between States, countries of the world increasingly share more common interests while facing more common challenges. Interdependence between States has reached an unprecedented level in both depth and scope. Under such circumstances, attempts to seek so-called absolute security for oneself at the expense of other countries will definitely go nowhere and benefit nobody.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was signed in 1972 by the United States and the former Soviet Union, constitutes a cornerstone of global strategic stability, and its significance goes far beyond the bilateral relations between the United States and Russia. That Treaty has a direct bearing on the security interests of all countries, and should be strictly observed. Any attempt to violate the Treaty, under whatever disguise, will seriously undermine the global strategic balance and stability, jeopardize trust between States and produce far-reaching negative impacts on international peace and security and the multilateral disarmament and arms control process.

The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Preservation of and compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems". That demonstrates that most countries in the world hope to maintain global strategic balance and stability. They wish to preserve the efforts made and the achievements attained in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation since the end of the cold war. They are reluctant to see trust and cooperation between States jeopardized by a national missile defence system.

We have taken note of the recent decision by the President of the United States not to deploy a national missile defence system at this time. That is a wise decision. Nevertheless, we have also noticed that the national missile defence programme has not yet been abandoned and that, in fact, research and development still continue on that system. As an important forum for international security and disarmament, the First Committee should pay serious attention to this issue.

At this General Assembly session, China will join Russia, Belarus and other countries in submitting for the second time a draft resolution on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. We seek the support of more countries for that draft resolution, so as to contribute to the maintenance of the global strategic balance and stability in a spirit of sincerity and cooperation. We also hope that the United States will heed the appeals of the international community, consult other countries on this issue, and abandon the national missile defence programme as soon as possible, as that programme serves no one's interests.

Outer space is the common heritage of humankind, and its peaceful exploitation our common aspiration. The prevention of an arms race and the prohibition of weapon systems in outer space will not only avert wars in outer space but also make a crucial contribution to the maintenance of peace and stability on Earth. Some claim that there is no arms race in outer space at present. But what worries us is that a certain country is seeking military superiority in outer space and thereby strategic superiority on Earth. This is a fact, and the process is ongoing. Should this negative trend not be checked, the near future could bring the weaponization of, or even an arms race in, outer space.

History teaches us, as the old saying goes, that a stitch in time saves nine. The objective of arms control is, first of all, to prevent the emergence of weapon systems that could undermine global stability and to avert an arms race that could be triggered by such weapon systems. Whether there is, in fact, an arms race in outer space at this stage should not constitute the decisive factor in determining whether the international community should address the danger of the weaponization of, or an arms race in, outer space. Nor should it be an excuse for certain countries to block negotiations leading to the conclusion of legal instruments on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Humankind would pay a much higher price if it were to take action only after an arms race in outer space had become a reality.

In this connection, we were pleased to note that, at the recent Millennium Summit, President Putin of the Russian Federation proposed the convening of an international conference in 2001 on the prevention of the militarization of outer space. We support this initiative and hope the international community will respond positively.

Recent changes in the international situation have once again highlighted the issue of missiles. Despite differing views on the threat posed by missiles, an increasing number of countries are realizing that it has become urgent for the international community to address this question. China believes that the issue is a complex and global one, and that any unilateral approach or measures detrimental to global strategic stability could only aggravate rather than resolve the problem. Any discriminatory cartel-style control measures would not offer any long-term solutions, though they might ease the problem temporarily. To resolve this issue definitively, all countries, and especially military Powers and military groups, should strictly abide by the Charter of the United Nations and other norms governing international relations; seek to settle international disputes by peaceful means; and refrain from interference in the internal affairs of other countries. This would create the favourable international security environment necessary for the resolution of the missile issue.

Secondly, an open, non-discriminatory global missile control regime should be established to provide uniform international criteria to guide the practices of all countries. We support the role of the United Nations, the most representative international Organization, in examining all aspects of the question of missiles in a comprehensive and objective manner.

The successful conclusion this year of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which a Final Document was adopted, represents a milestone in the field of international security and arms control. In the wake of a series of heavy blows to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, such as the nuclear tests in South Asia and the refusal by a major country to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the success of the NPT Review Conference takes on even greater importance.

It demonstrates the common will and determination of the international community to preserve the system of legal instruments regulating international arms control and non-proliferation. The outcome of the Conference will help promote the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process.

At the sixth NPT Review Conference, the five nuclear-weapon States, for the first time in history, made a collective and unequivocal commitment to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and pledged not to target their nuclear weapons against any State. We hope that these commitments will give a new impetus to the global nuclear disarmament process. In this connection, we welcome the ratification of START II and its relevant protocols by the Russian Duma, and we urge the other State party to the Treaty to complete its ratification procedure as soon as possible so as to achieve the early entry into force and implementation of the Treaty.

We also hope that the two States will negotiate and conclude new nuclear-arms-reduction treaties at an early date. This would create the necessary conditions for other nuclear-weapon States to join the nuclear disarmament process and facilitate the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world. I would like to emphasize that the principle of irreversibility should apply to the nuclear disarmament process. The nuclear weapons eliminated under disarmament agreements should be destroyed. Simply transferring nuclear warheads from deployment to reserve status while keeping them in constant readiness for future redeployment cannot be regarded as genuine nuclear disarmament.

China, as a nuclear-weapon State, has never evaded its responsibility and duties in the area of nuclear disarmament. China has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and total destruction of nuclear weapons, and it has unconditionally undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones.

China maintains a limited and efficient nuclear force for the purpose of deterring any nuclear attack against it. China's nuclear weapons do not pose a threat to any country. China has always supported international nuclear disarmament efforts, and we are in favour of dealing with nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. China took an active part in the CTBT negotiations and was among the first group of States to sign the Treaty. The Chinese Government has already submitted the CTBT to the National People's Congress for review and approval. We hope that the process of ratification of the Treaty by the Congress will go smoothly, but we also expect the other countries concerned to create the necessary external conditions for the ratification.

China understands the wishes of the large number of non-nuclear-weapon States on the issue of nuclear transparency. We are in favour of adopting appropriate and necessary transparency measures within the framework of the process of the elimination of nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, however, we believe that in addressing this issue, the tremendous differences between nuclear-weapon States on nuclear strategy, nuclear force and the security environment should be taken into consideration. Different States should be allowed to adopt different transparency measures at different stages. Only in that way can nuclear transparency measures truly enhance mutual trust and promote security. The safeguarding and strengthening of strategic stability and undiminished security for all States are basic principles that must be followed.

China maintains that the early conclusion of a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) will be conducive to the strengthening and improvement of the international regime for the non-proliferation and elimination of weapons of mass destruction. China is in favour of concluding the protocol negotiations before the convening of the fifth BWC Review Conference. It is important, however, to conclude a good protocol. To achieve such a goal, all parties should make joint efforts and demonstrate the necessary flexibility. The protocol negotiations should follow the principle of equality and strike a balance between rights and obligations. Declaration and verification measures should be formulated according to objective, just and scientific criteria instead of the prejudice or subjective judgement of a few countries. Any attempt by such countries to inspect others while exempting themselves, or to conduct more inspections of others and fewer of themselves, will only hamper negotiations and lead them astray.

Promoting international cooperation in the field of biology is an important aspect for comprehensively enhancing the effectiveness of the BWC. The countries concerned should undertake to abolish those export control cartels that are incompatible with the BWC and its protocol. This issue relates to equal rights for the

States parties and the future universality of the protocol. Its proper settlement, therefore, will have a decisive impact on whether the protocol can be concluded.

We are pleased to note that the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has been generally good, despite various difficulties since its entry into force three years ago. This has been achieved as a result of the consistent support of the international community for the chemical weapons disarmament process and the hard work of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The Chinese Government will, as always, continue to implement its legal obligations under the Convention comprehensively, seriously and strictly, so as to contribute to the early fulfilment of the purposes and objectives of the CWC.

It is of major concern for China to seek the speedy and thorough elimination of all the chemical weapons abandoned by Japanese troops in China, which are posing a serious threat to the Chinese people and the environment. Since the Chinese and Japanese Governments signed a memorandum in July 1999 on the destruction of the abandoned chemical weapons, the two countries have cooperated well and made some progress in this field. However, the destruction process is already behind the schedule provided for in the Convention. We expect the Japanese Government to make further efforts to thoroughly resolve this issue as soon as possible.

In recent years, the grave threat posed by small arms — especially by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking and trade in small arms — to social development, civilian safety and regional security has become a common concern of the international community. Efforts have been made at the national, regional and global levels to resolve the problem. Some countries and regions have taken a series of unilateral or multilateral measures in the light of their local conditions. Negotiations on the firearms protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime will be resumed this month in Vienna, with a view to its early conclusion. The international Conference on the Illicit Trade In Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will be held next year.

China is very concerned about the suffering caused by small arms in the countries — especially developing countries — and regions concerned. We fully understand the concern of those countries about this problem and appreciate the efforts they have made to resolve it. Proceeding from this position, China has actively participated in multilateral efforts to address the issue of small arms. It is our view that to resolve the complex issue of small arms, first, the international community should urge all countries to improve and strengthen relevant national measures, in the light of their own conditions, to keep small arms under effective control. Secondly, the international community should not limit its efforts to the problem itself; more efforts should be made to eliminate the source of the problem. Thirdly, all countries, regions and international organizations should further strengthen their communication, coordination and cooperation. Fourthly, State sovereignty should be respected, and the legitimate manufacture, possession and transfer of small arms should be protected.

Like other delegations, the Chinese delegation is deeply disappointed and very concerned that the Conference on Disarmament has once again failed to carry out substantive work this year. As the single global multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament cannot carry out its work in a vacuum. Any change in the international security situation will certainly have an influence on its work. Disarmament should contribute to the enhancement of universal security for all countries. It should not, instead, be exploited by a few countries to strengthen their own military superiority while restricting or weakening the defence capabilities of other countries or depriving them of such a capability. This principle must, of course, be reflected in the work of the Conference.

China believes that a fissile material cut-off treaty will be conducive to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It therefore supports the early commencement and conclusion of the cut-off treaty negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. Our position on this issue remains unchanged. At the same time, a series of negative developments, including, in particular, a setback for the CTBT and the attempt to overthrow the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and develop a national missile defence system, make people worry that the principles and objectives of the fissile material cut-off treaty are being compromised.

The General Assembly has, for many years, adopted by an overwhelming majority resolutions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The

resolutions clearly reiterate that the Conference on Disarmament should play a key role in negotiating multilateral instruments on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and request the Conference on Disarmament to set up, as early as possible, an ad hoc committee on outer space. No country has ever voted against this resolution in recent years. Only a very few countries have obstructed the Conference on Disarmament from carrying out work on this issue in accordance with the General Assembly resolutions. China believes that, as global strategic balance and stability are under threat and an arms race in outer space is imminent, the prevention of such a race is more urgent and important than the negotiations on a cut-off treaty.

In view of this, the Conference on Disarmament should at least deal with the three major disarmament issues, namely, outer space, nuclear disarmament and the cut-off treaty, in a balanced manner. China hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to work out a comprehensive and balanced work programme next year, so as to initiate negotiations on the three issues as early as possible.

Disarmament and security always complement each other. A favourable international security environment is a prerequisite for the steady advancement of international disarmament efforts. Progress in the disarmament field gives impetus to the improvement of the international security situation. Looking back over the past five decades, we can clearly see that international arms control and disarmament efforts have never ceased, despite dramatic changes in the international situation. Achievements, from the NPT and the ABM Treaty, concluded during the cold war era, to the CWC and CTBT, reached after the cold war, all demonstrate humankind's unremitting pursuit of international peace and security through arms control and disarmament. These arms control treaties constitute an important part of the global architecture of collective security established after the Second World War. They have played, and will continue to play, a significant role in creating a stable and predictable international security environment.

Any approach to dismiss treaties concluded by the international community after so many years as "products of the cold war" or to call for their abandonment is neither fair nor wise.

At present, the problem facing us is not whether we should abandon existing international arms control treaties, but rather how to consolidate existing arms control and disarmament achievements, deepen international cooperation in this field and proceed to negotiate and conclude new arms control treaties. As a peace-loving country, China sincerely supports international arms control and disarmament efforts. Since ancient times, the Chinese people have adopted the philosophy of "peace is precious". They hope that the world is at peace and that they can live in harmony with people of other countries. To concentrate its efforts on its modernization drive, China needs a long-term peaceful and stable international environment. China wishes to join efforts with other countries to promote the steady and sound development of international arms control and the disarmament process.

Mr. Noboru (Japan): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I would like, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, to extend to you my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly during its fifty-fifth session. I am confident that, with the benefit of your broad experience in the field of disarmament and demonstrated diplomatic skill, the Committee will conduct its work in a most efficient and productive manner. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you discharge your important responsibilities.

At the recent Millennium Summit of the United Nations General Assembly, heads of State and Government from around the world declared that they would spare no effort to free their peoples from the scourge of war and would strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. Without getting into all the specifics and details, they sent a clear and simple message that should be repeated until our arms control and disarmament goals are achieved and people throughout the world can live in peace and security.

In addressing this Committee last year, my predecessor noted a series of recent setbacks in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and stressed the need to reverse that discouraging trend. With the successful conclusion of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), I believe that negative trend has in

fact been stemmed. The Final Document that was unanimously adopted at the Review Conference is testimony to the determination of the world community to maintain and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We must not lose this momentum. Indeed, it is incumbent upon us to implement practical measures for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as called for in the Final Document of the Review Conference.

I believe that this Millennium General Assembly should take practical steps towards the total elimination of nuclear arsenals. From this point of view, as our Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori explained at the Millennium Summit, Japan has decided to introduce a new draft resolution that marks paths to be taken towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. The previous resolutions sponsored by Japan also set out steps that would lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons. This year, however, I believe we can better elaborate and define the road map, taking into account the agreement reached at the NPT Review Conference.

The most important goal at this juncture is the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The fact that, of the 44 States whose ratifications are required for its entry into force, 14 States, including two of the nuclear-weapon States, have not yet ratified the Treaty underscores the need for the world community to strengthen its efforts in this regard. When we consider that four years have passed since the opening of the Treaty for signature, it might now be useful to set a specific target year for its entry into force. Japan, for its part, has been tirelessly promoting the ratification of the CTBT for the countries concerned. As coordinator of the second conference for the facilitation of ratification, Japan has also been working in Vienna with other States. I am encouraged by the efforts being made to develop a broad consensus on getting the Governments of the two countries in South Asia that conducted nuclear test explosions to sign the Treaty. I would like to call upon both of them to demonstrate strong leadership and to sign the Treaty as soon as possible.

Secondly, at its session next year the Conference on Disarmament should begin the negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, based on the Shannon Report (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein. It is truly regrettable that, despite agreeing twice in the past to begin such negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament remains stalled. I believe that next year will be critical in terms of maintaining the Conference's credibility. Building on the serious efforts made by successive presidents, the Conference on Disarmament should expeditiously reach agreement on its programme of work and commence the actual negotiations on the Fissile Materials Cut-Off Treaty with a view to concluding them before 2005.

Thirdly, the reduction of the United States and Russian strategic offensive arms is also of critical importance. The Japan-sponsored General Assembly resolutions of past years have consistently addressed the need to accelerate the START process, including the full implementation of START I, the early entry into force of START II and the early commencement and conclusion of START III. Although the process is now at a standstill, I acknowledge the efforts being made by both countries to engage in consultations. In this connection, we appreciate the United States Government's postponement of its decision to deploy a national missile defence system and to engage in further dialogue on this important issue. I hope that both Governments will continue efforts to reach agreement so that the international community may witness a revitalized nuclear disarmament process rather than face the danger of succumbing to a vicious circle in the arms race.

The Final Document of the NPT Review Conference also stipulates a number of steps to be taken by all the nuclear-weapon States, such as further unilateral efforts to reduce their nuclear arsenals, the engagement of all the nuclear-weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons and increased transparency with regard to the nuclear weapons capabilities. Although I will not reiterate each of them here, let me emphasize that they are all indispensable steps that will lead us to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Fourthly, Japan fully endorses the further development of verification capabilities to ensure a nuclear weapon-free world, as envisaged in the NPT Final Document. Japan stresses the importance, at this particular juncture, of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Model Protocol and welcomes the resolution adopted on 22 September at the IAEA General Conference containing elements of a plan of action to promote and facilitate the conclusion and entry into force of safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

The draft text of Japan's resolution, which contains all the elements I have just mentioned, will be formally introduced in due course. It is our intention to seek its adoption with the widest possible support.

The second item to which Japan attaches great importance is small arms. The excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of these arms continue to take a grave toll in human life and to cause tremendous suffering in many parts of the world. It is encouraging that various global, regional and national initiatives and measures have been taken to cope with this problem. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects scheduled for next year should provide a valuable opportunity to consolidate and further strengthen such efforts, as well as an occasion to promote international cooperation in dealing with this problem.

Japan has taken the initiative of introducing several General Assembly resolutions on small arms since 1995 and has made substantial contributions to various international activities in this area, especially within the framework of the United Nations. Those contributions include the establishment of the United Nations Panel and the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and donations of more than $3.5 million in support of United Nations activities.

We intend to continue to play a key role by, for example, presenting for the presidency of the United Nations Conference on small arms next year a candidate with excellent expertise and experience — Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki — who chaired both aforementioned United Nations groups of governmental experts, which produced two highly valuable reports in 1997 and 1999. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference, Japan will introduce in this Committee a draft decision on the date and venue of the Conference. Its text will be formally submitted to the Secretariat in due course.

Japan is also concerned about the ongoing proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. This trend is threatening peace and stability in different regions and is affecting the security of the entire world. It will be the task of the international community in the twenty-first century to counter this new challenge. In this connection, Japan welcomes the statement made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it would suspend missile launches while its high-level talks with the United States are under way and calls upon it to continue that suspension.

I will now briefly touch upon other items which are also on the agenda of this Committee. First, Japan believes that the negotiations on a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) should be concluded before the BWC Review Conference is convened next year. There are more than a few unresolved issues and all States concerned should make further efforts to bridge their differences.

Secondly, with regard to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, Japan strongly hopes that a resolution endorsing the Secretary-General's report will be adopted with overwhelming support. I might add in this connection that we welcome the participation of Uzbekistan in the Register, which enhances the usefulness of this mechanism as an international confidence-building measure.

Thirdly, the Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held this September in Geneva, addressed the problem of the continued use of these weapons. Japan has long been involved in efforts to deal with this problem and will continue to make major contributions to international initiatives until the goal of "zero victims" is achieved.

Finally, Japan pays particular attention to the work being done by the three United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. I highly appreciate the Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific for its constructive role, particularly in the preparation of an agreement on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

I would like to conclude my statement by reiterating my full confidence in your ability, Mr. Chairman, to lead our work in such a way that will achieve significant results. I can assure you of my delegation's full cooperation throughout your tenure.

Mr. Valdez Carrillo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your important post. I extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

who, led by you, will guide the work of their important Committee to a successful conclusion.

We are embarking on a new session following a year that could be described as paradoxical in matters of disarmament. The year 2000 has seen agreements and progress on some significant issues, but it has also been characterized by paralysis and stagnation on others. Important disarmament treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, have been strengthened as a result of the follow-up processes established by the parties themselves. However, we have also seen a lack of action and the resumed indefinite postponement of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and other important legal instruments. Moreover, unilateral actions have been taken that are inconsistent with established commitments, thus weakening certain basic legal instruments.

These developments and events generally reflect a difficult and complex situation, as well as a challenge to those of us who are committed to the wider and more ambitious goal of total disarmament.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, we must stress the expectations that have arisen from the NPT Review Conference, at which a consensus was reached between the States parties. The Final Document expresses a clear commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to the total elimination of their arsenals. This helped to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and to revitalize the ongoing objective of the Treaty ultimately to achieve general and complete disarmament.

However, some problems remain, such as the reaffirmation of nuclear strategic doctrines based on exclusively unilateral approaches; the lack of concrete measures to promote general disarmament and of legally binding security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States on the non-use of nuclear weapons; and the ongoing state of alert of many of these arsenals.

This situation should be reversed. The proposals of the Secretary-General, endorsed by the heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit, could serve as the basis for such a change. They include the possibility of convening an international conference to decide appropriate ways to eliminate nuclear threats.

The actions undertaken by Peru in this context include its assumption on 1 July of the vice-presidency of and coordinating role for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Preparatory Commission for the establishment of an International Monitoring System for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My country is committed to the regional mandate, the first task of which will be to promote that instrument in order to obtain the ratifications necessary to its entry into force. Last December, Peru also hosted the annual General Conference of the States members of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and has supported with practical measures the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, aimed at preventing nuclear proliferation in that region.

Peru, as a member of the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, stresses the importance of the establishment of such zones because of their significant contribution to the promotion of peace and regional and world security. In this respect, we have firmly demonstrated the need to strengthen the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere based on existing nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Bangkok and Rarotonga. This would be a concrete step to promote nuclear non-proliferation and to strengthen of a universal nuclear-weapon-free regime.

That would also facilitate coordination on such common issues as the fight against pollution of the environment by radioactive wastes, the strengthening of the rules for the transport of such wastes, the protection of the marine habitat and the development of contingency plans, among a number of important measures.

Furthermore, in the past year we have been concerned about the proposal to deploy an anti-ballistic missile system, which would undoubtedly affect the commitments made under the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. It would also have negative effects on the climate of trust required to implement the gradual processes of reducing nuclear weapons and pursuing worldwide disarmament.

At the same time, we must note with satisfaction the recent announcement by the President of the United States of the postponement of the development of this

system. We hope that as a result the integrity and validity of the ABM Treaty will be preserved.

Peru would like to highlight the importance of the international Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, to be held in 2001. This is a particularly important issue for our country, because such weapons raise the level of violence by various criminal organizations within States, which at times poses a real threat to internal and regional security, with the principal victims being defenceless civilians.

Peru reaffirms its resolve to promote and encourage an international consensus in this regard. In Latin America these problems are closely linked to organized crime, subversion and drug trafficking, which are very harmful and destructive for our peoples. In this connection, in Peru we have developed a legal framework for penalizing illegal possession of firearms and regulating their acquisition and possession.

To deal with such problems, it is essential to establish international cooperation measures aimed at reducing and then preventing the proliferation and excessive accumulation of these weapons and to fight against and stop illicit trafficking in them. However, solutions should take into account the specific characteristics of each State.

Regarding other areas of disarmament, Peru also recognizes the importance of continuing to work for the final eradication of anti-personnel landmines. We welcome the holding last September of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. The persistence of these weapons exacerbates tensions, undermines confidence and makes all diplomatic efforts to find peaceful solutions to conflicts more difficult. Landmines are also a real threat to thousands of innocent civilians who may fall victim to them.

The result of the Meeting is a clear manifestation of the political will of States to continue making progress towards the universalization of the Convention and the complete prohibition of these indiscriminate weapons. We learned at the Meeting of the significant progress that has been made and the concrete results that have been achieved in demining and the destruction of stocks of mines. Twenty-two States have already concluded this latter process.

Because of its own experience, Peru is committed to the total elimination of these weapons and will support, as in past years, a declaration by the Assembly urging all States to sign, ratify or adhere to the Ottawa Convention as soon as possible.

The Government of Peru would also like to highlight the important role that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has its headquarters in Lima, is playing and can continue to play as a forum for discussion and the promotion of consensus on joint action concerning key issues on the international agenda. It is important to highlight the Secretary-General's statement in his last report (A/55/169) on the Centre that it has launched projects aimed at furthering the understanding of the relationship between security and development, enhanced the role of the Organization as a regional catalyst for activities on peace and disarmament, and acted as a politically neutral platform for discussions on security and development issues. This capacity, however, depends on the provision of sufficient resources to allow the Centre to fulfil its objectives. We urge Member States — particularly the States of Latin American and the Caribbean — to continue contributing to the strengthening of the Centre and to its programme of work.

We must make progress on the adoption of confidence-building measures as the basis for regional and general disarmament, which can help redirect the massive financial resources now being used for security purposes to the promotion of the well-being and development of all the peoples of the world. These measures, along with the establishment of a favourable and equitable international economic system, will decisively benefit the human person to the promotion of development and international peace and security.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and through you Myanmar, on your well-deserved election to Chair the work of this Committee. We are convinced that with your acknowledged skill you will be able to ensure the success of our work. I can assure you that the Committee will continue to have the cooperation of my delegation. We congratulate the other members of the Bureau, and express our gratitude to the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile, for his outstanding leadership during the last session.

Over the past 50 years Costa Rica has made disarmament a central focus of its daily activities. We

are a country without arms and without an army. Our children have never seen a helicopter gunship, a tank or a warship. In our country we have schools, not barracks. Costa Rica has not entrusted its national security to the force of arms; rather, my country has placed its trust in international law and multilateral mechanisms. Costa Rica's sole security guarantee is the prohibition on the use of force incorporated in the Charter of the United Nations; we have placed our protection in the hands of this Organization and its multilateral mechanisms. At the same time, we have recognized that every manifestation of the drive to possess weapons is contrary to the objectives of peace, security and development, which should guide international relations in the modern world. Today we are seeing how the accumulation of weapons and munitions is a real obstacle to peace and a direct threat to the security of all the nations that, like Costa Rica, are true peace-lovers.

As a result, the pursuit of general and complete disarmament through legally binding international instruments is of the greatest importance to my country. These instruments are the fundamental pillars of an increasingly safe and stable world in which all the members of the international community assume their responsibility for building a better world for all. To this end, we believe that the codification and adoption of new international standards in the field of disarmament should be given the highest priority on the international agenda. Costa Rica is attempting to participate actively in this process of codification and in the progressive development of international standards on disarmament. This is why today we are trying to find an appropriate place in the main bodies charged with this responsibility, such as the Conference on Disarmament, the specialized multilateral forum for promoting disarmament in all its forms.

In the Millennium Declaration, adopted less than a month ago, our heads of State and Government solemnly promised to "spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war", and to this end they reaffirmed their commitment to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, end the illicit arms trade, and support regional disarmament efforts. Our mandate is clear. This Committee should implement these instructions that emanate directly from the highest political authorities of the international community. We cannot present excuses or objections.

That is why we should follow the example of our heads of State, who called on all those States that have not yet ratified the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines to do so as soon as possible. Costa Rica firmly supports the various projects aimed at eradicating once and for all this type of cruel and indiscriminate weapon. We believe that it is necessary for the international community to continue supporting mine clearance programmes and programmes aimed at providing assistance to victims and education to populations at risk.

The indiscriminate sale of weapons facilitates and encourages political instability and the violation of human rights. Arsenals of small arms prolong armed conflicts and make peace processes difficult. Furthermore, the availability of light weapons intensifies the degree of violence of common crimes. In the face of this reality, we should take full advantage of the opportunity that will be offered by the International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to elaborate binding norms to combat the trafficking and illicit production of small and light arms. At that Conference, which will be held next year, we should adopt practical and concrete measures in order to prevent the transfer of weapons, ammunition, military technology and dual-use technology to areas of conflict and non-democratic regimes that violate human rights, support terrorism or commit acts of aggression.

In line with the mandate of our heads of State, we should design mechanisms to collect, confiscate and destroy surplus small weapons. It is necessary for us to introduce a system of information and verification to guarantee that properly authorized transfers of weapons will not be diverted towards illicit ends. It is essential for us to reduce the production capacity for weapons and to start a serious process of conversion of the arms industry. Furthermore, we should institute controls and limits on the production, possession and trading of small arms within each of our jurisdictions, in order to prevent them from being used for purposes of crime, terrorism or insurgency.

It is worrying that the main exporters of weapons, paradoxically, are the permanent members of the Security Council and the main industrialized Powers. They have a special responsibility in relation to maintaining international peace and security. We believe, in this context, that it is essential for countries that produce and market weapons to exercise effective

control on their exports and to adopt firm measures to combat the manufacture of arms and their illegal trafficking.

In order to stop illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition, it is necessary to organize, at both the worldwide and regional levels, a multinational campaign of cooperation and international assistance aimed at strengthening customs and border controls, at increasing coordination with police forces and at identifying all weapons available. In this respect, we have submitted for the consideration of all delegations a draft international code of conduct on arms transfers. This was drafted by 19 Nobel Peace Prize-winning individuals and institutions, including the former President of Costa Rica, Mr. Oscar Arias Sánchez. This document is available under the symbol A/54/766, published on 24 February 2000.

Costa Rica pleads for the prohibition of the transfer of military material and personnel as well as financial and logistic support to States whose military, paramilitary or security forces participate in or contribute to the violation of human rights. We feel that this prohibition should be extended also to States that do not respect the minimum democratic and civil guarantees. The export of weapons should be banned to countries that do not report their transfers to the United Nations, as well as to States that have not signed the main instruments on human rights, international humanitarian law and disarmament. We are convinced that all of these measures should be incorporated in a binding international agreement.

We are fully aware of the danger of certain transnational criminal activities for the smallest and most vulnerable countries. That is why we support the initiative of the small island States to eradicate criminal activities threatening their stability and security. We also support the initiative to declare the Caribbean a zone of peace.

Costa Rica condemns in all circumstances the use, possession, threat of use and development of nuclear weapons. We believe that from an ethical and legal point of view, there is no situation at all that justifies or legitimizes the existence of this type of weapon of mass destruction. No State has the right to endanger the survival of the human race.

We strongly and vigorously appeal to all countries that have not yet become parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty or the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to accede to these instruments as soon as possible without conditions. The universalization of these Treaties is indispensable to guarantee global security. We welcome the positive results of the NPT Review Conference held this year and reaffirm that non-proliferation should be accompanied by a gradual system of commitments culminating in total nuclear disarmament. Only full nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control will produce global security. In this respect, we advocate the convening at an early date of an international conference to examine how nuclear dangers could be eliminated, as is recommended in the Millennium Declaration.

We also reiterate the need for the nuclear Powers to exercise the greatest caution in order to avoid new sources of tension or mistrust. In this regard, we cannot hide our concern over the design and study of anti-missile defence systems. Outer space should be reserved for peaceful activities to the benefit of all humankind.

Costa Rica, as a member of the Latin American Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, firmly supports the creation and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. My country is proud to be party to the historic Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established for the first time a zone of this type, and we appreciate the positive contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to peace and global security. That is why we appeal strongly to the international community to heed the desire of States that want to create new zones of this type.

Finally, we must remember the multifaceted and positive relationship between disarmament and development. The reduction of military expenditures is particularly important for developing States. Our resources are scarce, and we cannot mismanage them. We should invest intensively and systematically in our human resources. We should fight for economic development, social justice and democratic institutions. In this context, armies are a heavy burden on our budgets, apart from being a constant source of tension and repression. Today we urge that economic resources used by the world for conventional and nuclear weapons be used to promote better economic and social development, as well as equity among all peoples. This is the real task of this Committee.

Mr. Bebars (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to convey to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at this session. I am confident that your leadership will be most effective and successful. I would also like to express our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Raimundo González, for his exceptional leadership of the First Committee during the fifty-fourth session, and to extend my congratulations to all the members of the Bureau.

I am hopeful that a positive spirit will dominate this year's work of the First Committee, such as that which prevailed during the work of the sixth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. That spirit enabled us to reach consensus and adopt the Final Document of the Conference, which encompassed unprecedented tangible results towards non-proliferation and disarmament in the field of nuclear weapons.

At the outset of the work of the First Committee on the disarmament issues on its agenda, we think it necessary to stress the priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament as clearly set out in the 1978 Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which gave utmost priority in efforts towards general disarmament to nuclear weapons, followed by other weapons of mass destruction, then by conventional weapons. Within the framework of our commitments, those are the priorities that should guide our work. In that context, we aspire to speedy agreement on the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in the very near future.

With the end of the cold war, people aspired to a new era characterized by peace, security and stability, an era in which the spectre of nuclear war and the threat of the total annihilation of humanity would vanish, an era in which the international community would abandon obsolete military doctrines based on the principle of nuclear deterrence. Regrettably, nuclear weapons and military nuclear arsenals continue to proliferate, and advanced nuclear programmes that fall beyond the scope of safeguards measures persist. Furthermore, certain States continue to resist the call of the international community to adhere to the NPT and to place their nuclear activities under international safeguards; some States also insist on obsolete doctrines of nuclear deterrence.

Regarding the elimination of nuclear weapons, various initiatives have been submitted, including one by the New Agenda coalition, of which Egypt is a member. We are encouraged by the overwhelming support extended to draft resolutions sponsored by the New Agenda coalition over the past two years, and we hope that this year's text will be adopted by an overwhelming majority reflecting the international community's fulfilment of the commitments it made during the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, specifically, the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons as stipulated in article VI of the Treaty.

We further welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to hold an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, a proposal that was endorsed by heads of State or Government in the Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit. We hope that such a conference can be convened in the very near future, because it would constitute an additional step towards the implementation of the 1998 initiative of President Hosni Mubarak on the holding of an international conference on ways to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pose an equal threat to all mankind. Thus, reason dictates a unified international effort to foster a climate propitious to the establishment of the mechanisms necessary to completely eliminate that threat within an international framework. This matter should be entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament as the proper international forum for the negotiation of disarmament issues. We regret the Conference's repeated failure over the past three years to agree on an agenda. We further regret the lack of political will, especially among the five nuclear-weapon States, to enter into constructive multilateral negotiations that would lead to the full implementation of their commitments under article VI of the NPT. We believe that that position, especially following the NPT Review Conference, not only contradicts their general commitments under article VI and those undertaken at the sixth Review Conference, but also compromises the principles and objectives of the Treaty. Therefore, we believe that the overall process of international work in

this sphere ought to accord with the following four principles.

The first is the need for a non-discriminatory international treaty banning nuclear weapons, and for a treaty to ban fissile materials in a broader context, including stockpiles of such materials.

The second is the need for the international community to recognize that the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

The third relates to the need to agree on international arrangements to assure the prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. We look forward to serious work in the Conference on Disarmament to that end, with a view to agreeing on arrangements that go beyond the scope of Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) and that include elements relating to credibility and to deterrence.

The final principle is related, in the context of the Conference on Disarmament, to the need for a serious commitment to prevent an arms race in outer space. We regret the failure of the Conference to deal with this topic. We emphasize the importance of ceasing the arms race, which is harmful and is a waste of human energy, before it is too late. Failure to negotiate a resolution of the arms race will tie our hands in the face of adverse and dangerous technological advances controlled by a minority of nations. Should we wait for a disaster, and then try to deal with it?

Progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons has to start with serious regional efforts that aim at realizing nuclear disarmament and at ridding the world of nuclear dangers. In our region, the Middle East, all States of the region have committed themselves to realizing this lofty objective by adhering to the NPT and abiding by all related undertakings, with the exception of one country, Israel, which refuses to join in the region's efforts and which insists on retaining the nuclear option on the basis of redundant, obsolete doctrines of deterrence. In order to confront that inflexible position, the international community united in adopting the Final Document of the sixth NPT Review Conference, which reiterated the importance of Israel's adherence to the Treaty and the placing of its nuclear installations under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. That repeated call reflects the unique nature of the situation in the Middle East and reaffirms the need to follow up the implementation of the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution on the Middle East.

Egypt realizes that addressing the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is a matter of urgency and cannot be delayed or faced reluctantly. Egypt has thus stepped up its efforts to rid the region of the nuclear threat and of the danger of retaining nuclear facilities that are not subject to comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

The following initiatives have received wide and consolidated international support. In 1974, the General Assembly adopted, for the first time, a resolution on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East; such a resolution has been adopted by consensus since 1980. The General Assembly has annually adopted by an overwhelming majority a resolution on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, calling on Israel, as the sole State in the region outside the NPT, to adhere to the Treaty without delay and to discard the nuclear option. President Mubarak took the initiative, in April 1990, of calling for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and of their means of delivery in order to avert the dangers posed by these weapons, and as a natural extension of Egypt's initiative, calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. The IAEA has annually adopted a consensus resolution on IAEA safeguards in the Middle East that calls for the implementation of full scope IAEA safeguard measures with regard to all nuclear facilities in the Middle East; furthermore, the Conference on Disarmament considers annually an agenda item on Israeli nuclear capabilities and their dangers. The Disarmament Commission's adoption in April 1990 of general guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones provided the basis for such a zone in the Middle East. The sixth NPT Review Conference affirmed that Israel must adhere to the Treaty and place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguard measures, with a view to realizing the objective of full adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East.

Despite all these efforts, Israel has not yet responded to the calls of the international community to adhere to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguard measures. Nor has Israel responded to suggestions at the international and regional levels to begin serious negotiations on the subjective and procedural aspects for freeing the

Middle East of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, thus increasing our determination to achieve serious and effective progress to save the Middle East from the scourge of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Transparency in armaments includes transparency in all types of weapons and related military technologies, including weapons of mass destruction; it is not restricted to certain types of weapons. Transparency must contribute to a clearer view of the excessive accumulation of all types of weapons that endanger international peace and security and must function as an early warning mechanism.

In our view, transparency in weapons of mass destruction is equal in importance to transparency in conventional weapons because security is an integral whole. Despite Egypt's support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a means of building confidence, our assessment of the meetings of governmental experts entrusted with the matter, including the meeting held this year, is that they failed to expand the scope of the Register to cover military holdings achieved through national production. They also failed to include additional types of weapons of mass destruction, contradicting resolution 46/36 L, which called for the establishment of the Register, and therefore leading to its further rigidity and weakness.

Egypt believes that the international community must confront all actions that could affect human security, particularly in respect of women and children. Egypt condemns the use of those sectors of society as human shields or their victimization in armed conflicts. Therefore, Egypt supports the convening of a United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a means of reducing and alleviating the suffering of civilians exposed to the scourges of war. To that end, Egypt participated in the first preparatory meeting for the Conference and will participate in future meetings, in order to help establish sound principles necessary to ensure the success of the 2001 Conference.

In that context, we reiterate that the responsibility for illicit trade in small arms and light weapons does not fall on recipient parties only; it is also a legal and moral obligation of the manufacturing and exporting States, which must apply firmer export measures.

Despite our interest in the issue of small arms and light weapons, and our decision to participate in international efforts to organize and curb their handling, we remain cognizant of the need for serious consideration of all disarmament issues, with priority given to nuclear weapons because they are the most destructive. Our focus on nuclear weapons should not be overshadowed by an increasing interest in small weapons, anti-personnel landmines or other weapons. We need to fully recognize these issues and to treat them comprehensively and adequately.

With respect to landmines, Egypt is considered one of the world's most adversely affected countries. The number of mines and other explosive devices placed on Egyptian soil by forces involved in conflicts is estimated at 23 million. To deal with this problem, Egypt has, among other things, cooperated with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), which resulted in a visit to Egypt in February 2000 and in the preparation of a report on the mine problem in Egypt.

We express our deepest appreciation for the efforts of UNMAS and hope for future cooperation with other countries to clear Egypt of mines, which have hindered development for the last 50 years and have destroyed the lives of women, children and elderly people in Egypt.

While recognizing the humanitarian goal of the treaty, Egypt continues to maintain that the Ottawa Convention lacks the vision necessary to deal comprehensively with all aspects related to landmines, a stance that Egypt has declared at numerous forums and that needs no further reiteration.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee, and to assure you of our assistance in carrying out your tasks. We will cooperate fully with you so that the work of this Committee will be successful. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau who will assist you. It is a pleasure for me to express my delegation's full appreciation to Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his comprehensive statement on efforts undertaken on disarmament issues. We hope his efforts will be successful in strengthening international peace and security.

The international community has witnessed, since we last met, developments, both positive and negative, in disarmament issues -- a fact referred to by you, Mr. Chairman, in your opening statement. Those

positive changes include the Millennium Summit Declaration, in which heads of State called for eliminating the dangers posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the scourge of war, which caused more than 5 million deaths in the past decade. In that Declaration they also called for stopping the activities of mafia groups using armaments to provoke war in order to preserve their own greedy interests. Proceeds from the sales of weapons reached $30.3 billion last year, a record number. Studies have also shown an increase in military expenditures, which has had a negative impact on disarmament efforts.

Another extremely important event was the historic agreement reached at New York last May during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the ratification of a document that the Secretary-General called an important step towards fulfilling mankind's dream of building a peaceful world free from nuclear threats. We welcome the political commitment of the five major nuclear Powers to respect that document and to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, which include over 35,000 nuclear warheads. We hope that they will respect their commitments so that we may create a world free from nuclear weapons and so that they may extend their technical assistance to non-nuclear States to enable those States to utilize atomic energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with the provisions of the NPT.

The NPT can remain viable only if all the nuclear Powers are committed to the gradual elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to strengthening international peace and security. If we wish to maintain trust, we must move towards a de-alerting system for nuclear missiles and the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from foreign bases and international waters. Moneys allocated to maintaining nuclear weapons should be used to improve the lives of the poorest peoples, especially by eradicating pandemic diseases and poverty and improving their health and education systems.

The international community emphasizes the importance of the NPT, but Israel refuses to respect calls to end its nuclear arms programmes. Israel's nuclear capacity continues to grow and to endanger regional and international peace and security. That capacity threatens the Arab world, from the Gulf to the Atlantic. The threat of nuclear catastrophe as a result of Tel Aviv's acquisition of over 200 nuclear warheads is serious, not to mention its conventional, biological, chemical and other weapons. Israel has acquired them with the blessing of a major nuclear Power, which upholds a double standard by helping Israel develop its nuclear technology so that it can produce weapons of mass destruction, while preventing other countries from using the nuclear technology at their disposal for peaceful purposes. With that major Power's blessing, Tel Aviv continues to strengthen its nuclear capacity on land, in the sea and in the air. In fact, it was reported several weeks ago that Tel Aviv had received three Dolphin submarines from a major European Power. Those vessels can carry cruise missiles and launch nuclear warheads. In fact, those missiles were tested successfully in the Indian Ocean.

The Israeli army has at its disposal all sorts of weapons and is willing to use them. In recent days we have seen that army use those weapons to kill and wound scores of unarmed Palestinian men, women and children and to destroy their property simply because they are protesting colonization and calling for respect for their rights and dignity.

We have referred to this very important issue because we are convinced that until the international community takes effective measures to force Israel to adhere to the NPT, eliminate its nuclear weapons and heed the call of the international community to become part of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and place its nuclear installations under verification, then all non-proliferation efforts will be in vain, as will every disarmament effort by the international community.

We feel that the Russian Federation's ratification of the START II Treaty and the United States decision to put off deployment of a national missile defence system are positive developments that should boost confidence and further international peace and security. However, negative developments are also of concern to us. They include the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to come up with an adequate agenda. We hope that a compromise will be reached very soon in that regard.

We welcome the holding next year of an international conference to debate all the important issues related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We also welcome the efforts of some African countries to collect and destroy such weapons in order

to improve their social and economic situation. The international community must help the States concerned to set up a comprehensive system to deal with this situation and to provide them with the necessary resources to keep improving. I would also like to mention the recent International Conference on War-affected Children, held in Canada. We support the recommendations from that Conference to save those children, protect them from violence and make it possible for them to live in dignity.

My country has acceded to most international agreements on nuclear disarmament. However, we need to review certain agreements that concentrate on some issues and bypass others. In this regard, I refer to the Ottawa Convention, which failed to mention the responsibilities of belligerent countries that planted mines in the territories of other countries. Victim countries need de-mining assistance. Libya is one such country that has suffered from mines placed in its territory during the Second World War. We therefore ask the countries responsible for planting them to shoulder their responsibilities.

In conclusion, I wish to express our hope that the Disarmament Commission will make every effort to reach consensus compromise regarding the need to take all necessary measures in the area of disarmament, to address the difficulties confronted by the international community, to put an end to growing weapons-related expenditures, and to allocate more funds to the developing countries and deploy greater efforts to allow them to move forward and reap the benefits of globalization.

Mr. Kongstad (Norway): I would like to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I can assure you of our support and cooperation.

This is the first General Assembly of the twenty-first century. Our heads of State or Government, in the Millennium Declaration, stated their resolve to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. The task for us is to contribute to the realization of that vision. Political will is a key to progress. Let us make it a new beginning in our efforts to achieve peace, security and disarmament.

I would like to focus on a limited number of issues that Norway believes should be given special priority in our work.

The threats that motivated the push for a global nuclear non-proliferation regime four decades ago remain very real today. Our ultimate goal remains complete nuclear disarmament. Strengthened adherence to and compliance with international instruments are necessary to achieve this goal. If we fail to reduce the political and strategic significance of nuclear weapons, our non-proliferation efforts will be in vain.

The successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) gives cause for new optimism. The Conference reaffirmed the importance of the integrity of the Treaty for international peace and security. Further practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were identified and agreed upon.

The programme of action identified in paragraph 15 of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference is a significant result. We particularly welcome the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

The Norwegian Government confirms the commitments made at the NPT Review Conference and will work to carry forward the conclusions reached at the Conference. We believe the Millennium Assembly should reconfirm and consolidate the results of the NPT Review Conference. The challenge now before us is to build on the significant outcome of the Conference and translate words into practical action. The Final Document of the Conference should be seen as a basis for practical steps and systematic and progressive efforts to achieve the disarmament objectives of the Treaty.

In the NPT process we have the framework we need. We call on all States to work actively to realize the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and implement the agreed measures and practical steps. We hope that the important results of the Review Conference can lead those States that are still not parties to the agreement to look again at their position. Universal adherence to the Treaty and full compliance of all parties with its provisions remain the best way to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

The signals from the disarmament negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation are of the highest importance, not only in a bilateral

nuclear disarmament context, but also for global efforts to curb any further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We welcome the ratification of START II by the Russian Federation earlier this year. This was an important contribution to the goal we are all striving for. The early entry into force and full implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III negotiations with a view to further significant strategic reductions will be of great importance for the nuclear disarmament process. We encourage the Russian Federation and the United States to negotiate and implement new measures for strategic arms reductions.

We believe increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to their nuclear-weapon capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to article VI of the NPT can be important steps leading to nuclear disarmament, as was also recognized by the NPT Review Conference.

START III negotiations and specific transparency measures related to strategic inventories are both initiatives that would reflect the reduced importance of nuclear weapons and contribute significantly to a better climate of international cooperation by demonstrating a commitment to the practical follow-up of the steps agreed at the NPT Review Conference.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is a cornerstone of strategic stability, contributing to the broader disarmament and arms control process. We welcome the reaffirmation by the Russian Federation and the United States of their continued commitment to the ABM Treaty and to the strengthening, preservation and continuation of the Treaty. We urge the parties to continue their cooperation on this basis.

A key element in a comprehensive strategy to contain and eliminate nuclear weapons is a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosives. The conclusion of such a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament remains a high priority for Norway. It is time to make compromises in Geneva. We hope that in January next year it will be possible for the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work that includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty, with a view to their conclusion within five years.

There is also a need to address the issue of stockpiles related to excess weapons material, military inventories and highly enriched uranium for non-explosive purposes, all of which represent a proliferation risk. These issues should be dealt with in connection with, or through, a process independent of any negotiations in Geneva on a ban on production of fissile material.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was included among 25 core multilateral treaties identified in advance of the Millennium Summit as representing the key objectives of the United Nations. We warmly welcome the decision by the Duma of the Russian Federation to ratify the Treaty. We call upon all States, in particular those whose ratification is a prerequisite for the entry into force of the Treaty, to continue their efforts to ensure its early entry into force.

We welcome the fact that the NPT Review Conference placed the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons firmly on the international disarmament agenda. We continue to stress the need for further reductions in tactical nuclear weapons. Tactical nuclear weapons can be deployed rapidly and play a politically destabilizing role in areas subject to conflict. It is important to ensure that the handling and reduction of such weapons are made part of a more comprehensive disarmament process.

Increased transparency with regard to non-strategic weapons could be a first step and would be an important confidence-building measure. The next step could be the development of a programme for warhead destruction underpinned by bilateral verification procedures. The unilateral declarations of the United States and Russia in 1991 to withdraw and eliminate tactical nuclear weapons are important and should be reconfirmed, and a time-frame for implementation should be determined.

Norway's active involvement in international disarmament efforts is based on the premise that global security can best be achieved by seeking national security through common efforts. That is why our disarmament and non-proliferation policy is an integral part of our security policy. If we are to succeed in developing permanent regional and global security arrangements, it is important that all countries be firmly bound to the norms and institutions established by international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts should therefore be intensified and

incorporated into the security policy priorities of all countries.

Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation will play a major role in the achievement of the security objectives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As part of its broad approach to security, NATO actively supports arms control and disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. NATO remains committed to the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to reversing such proliferation, where it has occurred, through diplomatic means.

At NATO's Washington summit in April 1999, NATO members committed themselves to reviewing the alliance's policy options in support of confidence- and security-building measures, verification, non-proliferation and arms control and disarmament. As a member of NATO, Norway will, as a matter of priority, continue to actively support and contribute to this review as part of our efforts to promote a broader, more comprehensive and more verifiable international arms control and disarmament process. Norway strongly supports strengthened efforts to combat the proliferation of missiles and missile technology for weapons of mass destruction. Recent missile flight tests have once again demonstrated the urgency of curbing such proliferation.

We see a need for common international norms on missile-related activities. Such norms should include a definition of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour concerning the development, production, stockpiling or other means of acquiring missiles and missile technology. Norway takes an active part in ongoing discussions on how to develop enhanced and more effective measures to prevent missile proliferation, including strengthened export controls, as well as the establishment of relevant confidence-building measures, inter alia, through transparency measures or test moratoriums. We welcome initiatives taken in this area and look forward to taking part in the work on the establishment of effective measures to curb the proliferation of missiles for weapons of mass destruction.

The proliferation of biological weapons is widely recognized as a growing international security problem, both for inter-State conflicts and as a potential dimension of terrorism. It is therefore becoming increasingly important to reach agreement on an effective and reliable verification regime for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Norway remains deeply committed to the conclusion of the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group of the States parties in Geneva as soon as possible, but not at any cost. We must not compromise established standards for verification regimes. We need a result that can truly serve to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. We have now reached a stage in the negotiations at which necessary political will is required to achieve a final result.

Small arms and light weapons are the common weapons of armed conflict, responsible for the largest number of casualties. They make conflict more likely in tense situations, more vicious once started, and harder to recover from once ended. We are facing a common challenge. The problems caused by the uncontrolled spread and use of small arms are manifest worldwide.

Fortunately, the small arms issue is receiving increased international attention. The decision to hold a United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is a reflection of this fact. The United Nations Conference should support initiatives and efforts at national and regional levels. The Conference should also adopt a broad approach in addressing the small arms problems, which are multifaceted and multidisciplinary. Norway shares the opinion of the Secretary-General, expressed in the millennium report, that civil society and non-governmental organizations should be invited to participate fully. Non-governmental organizations possess experience and expertise that is indispensable for the Conference and the preparations for it.

We welcome the fact that Member States, through the General Assembly's Millennium Declaration, have pledged to take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms. However, even if all illicit arms transfers were to be eliminated, the problem posed by surplus stocks and illicitly held small arms would remain. Norway has supported practical measures regarding the collection and destruction of small arms in western and southern Africa, as well as in Albania, and has provided financial support to the United Nations regional disarmament centres. Norway also actively supports various initiatives addressing small-arms-related problems in Europe within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

United Nations development agencies should have an important role to play in addressing the underlying sources of conflict and the problems of small arms in a comprehensive way. We have therefore provided financial support to the United Nations Development Programme Trust Fund for Support to Prevention and Reduction of the Proliferation of Small Arms. We hope that other Member States will also make contributions to this Fund.

Norway had the honour to chair the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the mine ban Convention, which took place in Geneva last month. The active participation of, in particular, mine-affected countries and relevant non-governmental organizations through the International Campaign to Ban Landmines was impressive and most encouraging. With almost 110 States having ratified the Convention, it has come a long way towards universalization in a relatively short period of time. Our emphasis should now be on the complete and efficient implementation of the various provisions of the Convention.

The overall objective is to prevent new injuries and deaths and to support the survivors. Our focus should be on practical mine action activities in the field. In order to maintain our momentum and be able to continue to mobilize the resources required for activities in the field, we also need a continuous multilateral process and an international focal point. Norway therefore strongly supports the inter-sessional work programme taking place in Geneva within the framework of the Convention.

The Ottawa process and the Convention banning anti-personnel mines have made a significant and measurable difference. An international norm has been established and is working. This is shown by the growing number of Governments acceding to and fully implementing the Convention, the reduced use of anti-personnel mines, the dramatic drop in the production of such mines, the almost complete halt in trade in mines, increased destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, increased funding for mine action, fewer mine victims and the fact that more land has been demined. It is essential that we ensure sustainable and predictable future funding for mine action. To this end, Norway maintains its commitment to allocate $120 million over a five-year period.

I would like to make one final comment on conventional weapons. We are faced with growing political and humanitarian concern about the indiscriminate effects of explosive remnants of war. We therefore note with interest initiatives to address this important issue within the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We must seek a way to combine military utility with humanitarian acceptability.

The Conference on Disarmament is now in its fourth year without having done any substantive work. The present stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament reflects differing interests and political realities beyond the Conference on Disarmament, and cannot be resolved by the Conference itself. Apart from the current state of inertia, the Conference is also in urgent need of reform. The most pressing issue is to expand membership. Norway has long held the view that any country wishing to become a member should be admitted to that forum. If we claim to negotiate with a view to universal application, we have to open up for universal participation. Nothing else is politically justifiable.

Reform of the rules of procedure and the working methods is essential to the proper functioning of the Conference. The removal of the consensus rule should be considered, at least for procedural matters. It is important to speed up the reform process to avoid a situation where the Conference on Disarmament becomes an institution unable to deal with real matters of concern or to address relevant disarmament and arms control challenges. The existence of the Conference on Disarmament is not an end in itself. However, many problems can be dealt with only at the multilateral level, and our concern about the Conference on Disarmament as an institution is based on a firm belief in and commitment to multilateralism.

I should like to conclude by underlining the fact that the prospects for progress are a matter of commitment to common political objectives. Let us make use of the coming month to focus on practical steps that can contribute to a strengthened security system for the new millennium. This will be the aim of our participation in this Committee.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.